

**Not Ashamed
(Week 11)
Romans 4:9-25
“How Big is YOUR God?”**

Introduction

“He did not waver in unbelief at God’s promise but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, because he was fully convinced that what God had promised, He was also able to do. Therefore, it was credited to him for righteousness.”

Romans 4:20-22

If you were to briefly summarize the entire **Fourth Chapter of Romans** into a single sentence, it would simply say: Salvation is not attained by works, nor religious observances, but rather, it is only received by the power of God. That pretty much sums up the entire chapter. There is nothing that a person can do to save himself. Therefore, he must rely completely upon God to come to his rescue. And while it is true that we are required to have faith in order to obtain God’s grace, a quick study of the Holy Scriptures will inform us that even the faith that is necessary to save us has been given to us through God’s power.

“For you are saved by grace through faith; and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift — not from works, so that no one can boast.”

Ephesians 2:8-9

So you see, we cannot even take pride in our own faith, when it comes to our salvation. For if God had not granted us with enough faith to believe in His promises, then we would all yet be hopelessly lost. The point being, every part and parcel of our salvation is a reality, because of God’s power. This same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work within us (**Ephesians 1:19-20**).

I recently was talking with a young man about salvation. He proceeded to tell me that he did not believe that God could possibly save him, because of the many evil things that he had done in his life. At first, I felt sorry for the man, thinking how sad it was that someone carried so much guilt that it made them feel beyond redemption. Then it occurred to me exactly what the man was saying. When people say that they are beyond God’s forgiveness, what they are actually saying is that they don’t believe that God is truly able to save them. They are, in short, calling God a liar! They are saying that the blood of Jesus is somehow insufficient. Quite frankly, they are not humbling themselves, but rather, they are attempting to humble God. Let me assure you, God has more than enough power to keep His promises. So when you think about it, it really comes down to one simple question really: Just how big IS your God?

The Bible tells us that because Abraham believed God, he was given “righteous credit”. Even though Abraham was a sinner, just like the rest of us, God declared him to be righteous, because he trusted that God was able to make good on His Promises. Abraham’s salvation was based on God’s power alone, rather than Abraham’s good deeds, or Abraham’s religious observances. Even Abraham’s faith to believe had been granted to him by God. In short, every bit of Abraham’s salvation was a work of God’s mighty power. And this very same God, Who so graciously saved Abraham has the power to save us as well. No matter what we have done, or where we have been, Jesus has the power to make us new.

Abraham had to be able to take God at His Word in order to be made righteous. He had to be fully convinced in the greatness of God. And that is exactly what happened, for it was God that convinced him! Abraham believed, beyond any doubt, that God was greater than The Blackest Gloom, The Barren Womb, and even The Borrowed Tomb! Whatever the situation... God is Greater. Please allow me to explain. God is Greater than...

The Blackest Gloom

In Paul's day many Jews who had believed in the name of Christ were trying to convince the Gentile believers that in order to be saved, they must first convert to Judaism, observing all of its rituals such as circumcision, dietary restrictions, as well as, certain Jewish feast days. In fact, this teaching finally reached such a point, that Paul was forced to pen a letter to the Church at Galatia to get them back on track from the false teaching of these "Judaizers" that had infiltrated their ranks (see the book of *Galatians*).

It was as if the people were saying, "You must first clean yourself up, before you can come to God, or He will not accept you." In **Romans Chapter Four**, Paul makes it abundantly clear that it was not Abraham's religion that had made him acceptable to God. He had simply been chosen. In fact, not only did Abraham never receive The Law of Moses, he wasn't even circumcised, before he was declared righteous. Abraham, according to The Scriptures, was declared righteous around eighty-five years of age, when He believed God's promise (**Genesis 15:6**). He wasn't circumcised until he was ninety-nine, some thirteen years after the birth of Ismael (**Genesis 17**).

The point that Paul is making is that not only was Abraham not saved by his works, neither was he saved by his religious observances. He was saved by grace, through faith. You do not have to go to church or clean yourself up in order to be saved. You need to admit you are a sinner and submit yourself to God, believing that He can, and will save you... Then allow GOD clean you up! Again, it's all about a work of God's power, and not ours. If you are trusting Him to save you, then trust Him also to FIX what's wrong with you!

"I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." **Philippians 1:6**

So you see, it does not matter whether you are Jew or Gentile, if you place your trust in God's promise, not only will He save you, He will finish the work that He started in you. Again... everything in regards to our Justification (being declared holy), as well as, our Sanctification (being made holy) is a work of God, and not of us. We just have to trust that God is greater than even the blackest gloom.

I believe that immediately after Abraham rescued his nephew Lot from the marauding armies in **Genesis 14**, he went into a dark depression. This is also true of us it seems. So often, after we experience our greatest victories, we almost immediately enter into the darkest periods of doubt. Can I get a witness? This even happened to Elijah, the greatest prophet in *The Old Testament*. Immediately following his great victory over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, he went and hid in a cave because he had heard that the wicked Queen Jezebel had threatened his life (**1 Kings 18-19**).

In a much similar fashion to Elijah's Mount Carmel experience, I believe that after Abraham returned from his great victory, he was absolutely ecstatic over the success that God had given him. But, after he had turned down an alliance with the wicked king of Sodom, after the sacrifices given to The LORD and the great encounter with King Melchizedek, Abraham watched in silence as the ungrateful Lot returned once more to the city of Sodom. I am certain that he felt like a sojourner in a land where none were on his side. Now, of course, Abraham had enough men serving him to make up an army. He had a beautiful wife who loved him, and He had the promises of God. But, I believe in that moment Abraham felt more alone than he had ever felt in his life. I believe that this is why God came to comfort him in the darkest watches of the night to remind him of His promise.

He took Abraham outside and had him to look up at the night sky. I do this very same thing, when I feel discouraged and depressed. For years, I didn't even know why I did this, until it hit me one day (or night that is). Every time I go outside in the darkness and look up at those stars, I am reminded of just how big God is, and it **always** prompts me to pray. Every single time! I believe that God wanted to take Abraham outside to look up at the stars, to take Abraham's focus away from all that seemed wrong around him, and just remind him how big God really is. The God Who made all those stars not only hears us when we pray, but He is FOR US (**Romans 8:31**)! God wanted Abraham to know this, in a way that he had never really known before. And, He wants us to know it as well. So, let this be a reminder, when you are facing your blackest gloom, religion cannot help you, but HE can! God is greater than our Blackest Gloom, and those who will trust in His power are the spiritual descendants of Abraham (**Romans 4:12**). We are the family of those who BELIEVE God, and it has been credited to us a righteousness.

The Barren Womb

“As it is written: I have made you the father of many nations. He is our father in God’s sight, in whom Abraham believed — the God Who gives life to the dead and calls things into existence that do not exist. He believed, hoping against hope, so that he became the father of many nations according to what had been spoken: So will your descendants be. He did not weaken in faith when He considered his own body to be already dead (since he was about a hundred years old) and also the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He did not waiver in unbelief at God’s promise but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, because he was fully convinced that what God had promised, He was also able to do. Therefore, it was credited to him for righteousness.” **Romans 4:17-22**

Abraham became the spiritual father of all who believe, because he was convinced that God was able to bring forth life from death. Sarah, his wife, had been barren for all her life. Try as they might, Abraham and Sarah could produce no offspring. And yet, God had promised Abraham that he not only would have a son, but through that promised son would come a great multitude of people. Abraham, whose name means “father of multitudes”, had been given a very great promise indeed. And, although he did not fully comprehend just how that God would bring this miracle to pass, he believed that it would occur nonetheless.

As we know from the Biblical narrative, Abraham and Sarah mistakenly believed that they would somehow have to “help God” to fulfill this great promise. So, Abraham fathered a child by Sarah’s Egyptian handmaid Hagar and was certain that they had brought about the will of God. Later, when God reappears to Abraham and tells him that Ishmael was not the promised son, Abraham begs God to reconsider:

“So Abraham said to God, ‘If only Ishmael were acceptable to you!’” **Genesis 17:18**

What a perfect example of someone trying to find a way to fulfill God’s plan in their own human strength. Abraham and Sarah had devised a way that they could keep God’s promise for Him, or so they thought. But, God’s promises are kept solely by His power. This is also true for our salvation. We can’t do anything or say anything to help God keep His salvation promises. He does the work, **ALL** of the work by Himself, by His own power and might.

The same God, Who made all those stars, can also miraculously bring life from death. From Sarah’s barren womb would spring forth life. Just as God had promised. Only God could do such a thing. And, He does it time and time again, in the life of those who place their faith in The Risen Son of God.

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously lived according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit no working in the disobedient. We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath, as others were also. BUT GOD, Who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us, made us ALIVE with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by Grace!” **Ephesians 2:1-5**

So how can you get life to come forth from death? Only by the power of The One Who is Greater than the Barren Womb!

The Borrowed Tomb

“Now ‘it was credited to him’ was not written for Abraham alone, but also for us. It was credited to us who believe in Him Who raised Jesus our LORD from the dead. He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”

Romans 4:23-25

Have you ever considered God’s bringing forth a promised son from Sarah’s barren womb, to be a foreshadowing of His raising His Own Begotten Son son to life from a borrowed tomb? Well, make no mistake, that is exactly what Paul is doing here! Everything in The Scriptures points us directly to Christ. You see, as we said earlier, the gospel always has been, and always will be about the power of God bringing life from death. By the way, the reason Jesus was laid to rest in a borrowed tomb was because He wouldn’t be needing it that long! He rose, so we can know that if we put our faith in Him, then we too... shall rise. Just as Abraham believed God could bring life from His and Sarah’s old bodies (which he considered to be as good as dead, **vs 19**), we must also believe that God raised Jesus from the dead in order to be saved.

“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is LORD,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Romans 10:9

Now, just think about that for a moment. If you believe that God, the same God Who spoke the universe into being and Who created all those stars, can bring forth a promised son from a dead womb, and The Son of promise from a Borrowed Tomb, then is He not sufficient for everything you will ever need??? Of course He is! So place your faith completely in Him. He has the power to save you, and to finish what He began in you. Stop looking around at the situation and go outside and look up to the stars and remember just how big He truly is. Put your trust in Him, for without faith it is impossible to please God (**Hebrews 11:6**).

I don’t know where each of you are this morning in your relationship with God. Perhaps you have never trusted fully in His promise of Salvation. If that is the case, then look up at the stars and decide if He is big enough to keep His Word and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Or, perhaps you are going through a time of trial. You believe in Jesus, but as you look around at your situation, it seems so very hopeless. Look up at the stars and remember that the God Who made all of the universe has not only forgiven you, but He is FOR you. Whatever your situation may be, God is big enough to handle it. So...

“Casting all your cares upon HIM.... because He cares about YOU!”

1 Peter 5:7

He is greater than the blackest gloom, greater than the barren womb, and yes, even greater than the borrowed tomb.

And let all of those who believe in **His** Name say... TRUTH!!!