SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

Romans

Chapter Four, Verses 1–25

Faith Credited as Righteousness — Abraham believed God — credited before circumcision, before the Law, for our sake also

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Paul calls two witnesses — Abraham, the father of the nation, and David, its king — to prove that God credits righteousness to the ungodly who believe, apart from works, apart from circumcision and apart from the Law. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Paul's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Romans 4:1–25

credited · before the sign · promise · hope · for us

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

Contents

Two witnesses, one ledger, and the faith of Abraham

—	**How to Read This Study** · *the four voices & their colors*	3
—	**Before the Passage** · *from "apart from the Law" to "Abraham believed God"*	3
I	**Credited, Not Earned** · *Romans 4:1–8 · Abraham and David*	4
II	**Before the Knife** · *Romans 4:9–12 · before circumcision*	6
III	**The Promise Is by Faith** · *Romans 4:13–17 · promise, not Law*	9
IV	**Hope Against Hope** · *Romans 4:18–22 · hope against hope*	10
V	**Written for Our Sake Also** · *Romans 4:23–25 · for our sake also*	13
VI	**The Passage in the Whole Bible** · *cross-references*	14
†	**At a Glance** · *the four voices side by side*	16
†	**Key Insights & Questions for the Table** · *discussion*	16
†	**Sources** · *where each voice comes from*	18

"He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification." — Romans 4:25

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Romans 4:1–25

Faith Credited as Righteousness — Abraham and David, the ledger of grace, the faith that did not waver, and the Lord raised for our justification

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Romans 4 in 5 movements, in Paul's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the argument so you can see where Paul is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

- DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word
- R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
- C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle
- MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 4:5

"But to the one who does not work, but believes in △ Him who justifies the ungodly, ⟲ his faith is credited as righteousness,"

† Before the Passage

Romans 3 ended with a claim that would have stunned a synagogue: "a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law" (3:28), and God "will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith" (3:30). Then Paul asked the obvious objection out loud: "Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law" (3:31). Romans 4 is the proof. If justification by faith is new, Paul is wrong. So he goes back to the beginning of the nation and shows that it is the oldest gospel in the Bible.

He calls two witnesses, because the Law required two (Deuteronomy 19:15). The first is Abraham, "our forefather according to the flesh" (v. 1), the man every Jew claimed as father and many rabbis praised as one who kept the Law before it was given. The second is David, the king, who most likely wrote Psalm 32 after his own adultery and murder. The patriarch and the king — the best man in Israel's story and one of its most

notorious sinners — say the same thing: God credits righteousness to the man who believes, and does not count his sin.

The key verse is Genesis 15:6 — "Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." The Hebrew verb *ḥāšab* became *logizomai* in the Greek Old Testament, and Paul uses that one word eleven times in this chapter (NASB "credited," "credits," "take into account"). It is an accountant's word. The question of the chapter is what goes into the column marked *righteousness*, and who puts it there.

Watch the order of events. Abraham was credited righteous in Genesis 15; he was circumcised in Genesis 17, at ninety-nine — at least fourteen years later; and the Law came at Sinai "four hundred and thirty years later" (Galatians 3:17). Faith came first, the sign second, the Law long after. Paul's argument is built on that calendar, and it ends where every road in Romans ends: at Jesus, "delivered over because of our transgressions, and … raised because of our justification" (v. 25).

I
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 4:1–8

Credited, Not Earned

Two witnesses — Abraham the patriarch and David the king — and a God who justifies the ungodly

> 1 *What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?* 2 *For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.* 3 *For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."* 4 *Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.* 5 *But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,* 6 *just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:* 7 *"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.* 8 *"BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."*
>
> ROMANS 4:1–8

> *"Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."*
>
> GENESIS 15:6

> *"How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!"*
>
> PSALM 32:1–2

FIGURE · THE LEDGER OF GRACE

λογίζομαι · logizomai · “to credit, put to one’s account” (G3049)

Two ways a payment can be entered in the book (Romans 4:4–5)

WAGES · v. 4		GIFT · v. 5
WHO the one who works		WHO the one who does not work, but believes
ENTERED AS “what is due” · *kata opheilēma*	≠	ENTERED AS “a favor” · *kata charin*
GOD IS the employer who owes		GOD IS “Him who justifies the ungodly”
RESULT “something to boast about” (v. 2)		RESULT faith credited as righteousness

DAVID’S LEDGER · vv. 6–8 (Psalm 32:1–2)

DEBIT column · my sin	CREDIT column · righteousness
“the Lord will not take into account”	“God credits … apart from works”

Read across the two columns: the same verb, “credited,” enters either a debt God owes or a gift God gives — and David’s ledger shows both columns of the sinner’s account changed by grace.

ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην

ELOGISTHĒ AUTŌ EIS DIKAIOSYNĒN · “IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS” · G3049

Logizomai is ledger language: to reckon, to calculate, to enter to someone’s account. Strong’s G3049 occurs about forty times in the New Testament, and Romans 4 alone carries eleven of them (vv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22, 23, 24). The Greek Old Testament used it for the Hebrew *ḥāšab* of Genesis 15:6. The same verb runs through 2 Corinthians 5:19 — God “not counting their trespasses against them.” In verse 8 it is negated with the strongest Greek denial, *ou mē logisētai*: the Lord will by no means enter that sin to the man’s account. One verb, two columns — righteousness put in, sin kept out.

κατὰ χάριν … κατὰ ὀφείλημα · τὸν ἀσεβῆ

KATA CHARIN … KATA OPHEILĒMA · “AS A FAVOR … AS WHAT IS DUE” · G5485, G3783, G765

Verse 4 sets *charis* (G5485), grace, a gift freely given, against *opheilēma* (G3783), a debt owed — a word used only here and in the Lord’s Prayer (“forgive us our debts,” Matthew 6:12). A *misthos*, a wage, is never a present. Then verse 5 names whom God justifies: *ton asebē* (G765), the ungodly, the irreverent, the man with no fear of God. Paul does not say God justifies the almost-godly, or the ungodly once they improve. The participle *ton dikaiounta*, “the One who justifies,” describes what God habitually does.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik hears Paul answering a fair question: if justification is by faith, has God thrown away the way He dealt with Israel? No — Abraham himself was justified the same way, even though rabbis claimed he kept the Law before it was given. On "accounted" he is precise: "Our justification is not God making us perfectly righteous, but counting us as perfectly righteous." He borrows Wuest's picture of a sum deposited to an account in a bank. Grace and wages cannot mix — work puts God in debt, grace is received. He guards the point from abuse: "God isn't praising laziness here." And the ungodly man is justified not because of his ungodliness, he writes, but despite it.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul calls Abraham Paul's "exhibit A" and insists Abraham stood on the same ground we do, the person and work of Christ — his faith looked forward, ours looks back. He takes on James 2 squarely: Paul asks how an unjust man can stand before a holy God; James asks whether a faith that produces nothing can save, and answers with the Reformers that justification is by faith alone, "but not by a faith that is alone." Faith is the instrument, never the ground. Then he presses imputation as the heart of the gospel against Trent's infused righteousness: what saves is an alien righteousness, *extra nos* — "It is Christ's righteousness counted for you." Without it, he says, "That is not gospel; that is bad news."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In *All of Grace* Spurgeon builds a whole chapter on verse 5, "God Justifieth the Ungodly," and he loves the shock of it: "To justify the ungodly — this is a miracle worthy of a God." Only sinners need justifying; "It is out of the power of Omnipotence to forgive where there is no sin." So the self-righteous have no use for the gospel, and the lost are exactly the people it was written for: "The sinner is the gospel's reason for existence." His appeal is the one he made all his life — do not wait to reform first: "Come to Jesus just as you are, leprous, filthy, naked, neither fit to live nor fit to die."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry begins where Paul does, with authority: "It is not what this great man, and the other good man, say, but What saith the scripture?" If Abraham had earned his standing he could glory, but not before God, for "it is impossible for man, much more guilty man, to make God a debtor to him." Turning to David and Psalm 32, Henry finds the believer's happiness not in innocence but in pardon — God casts sin behind His back and hides His face from it, which makes forgiveness wholly a gracious act of God. His summary is short enough to memorize: "Pardoned people are the only blessed people."

II
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 4:9–12

Before the Knife

Credited while uncircumcised — the sign and seal, and a father for every believer

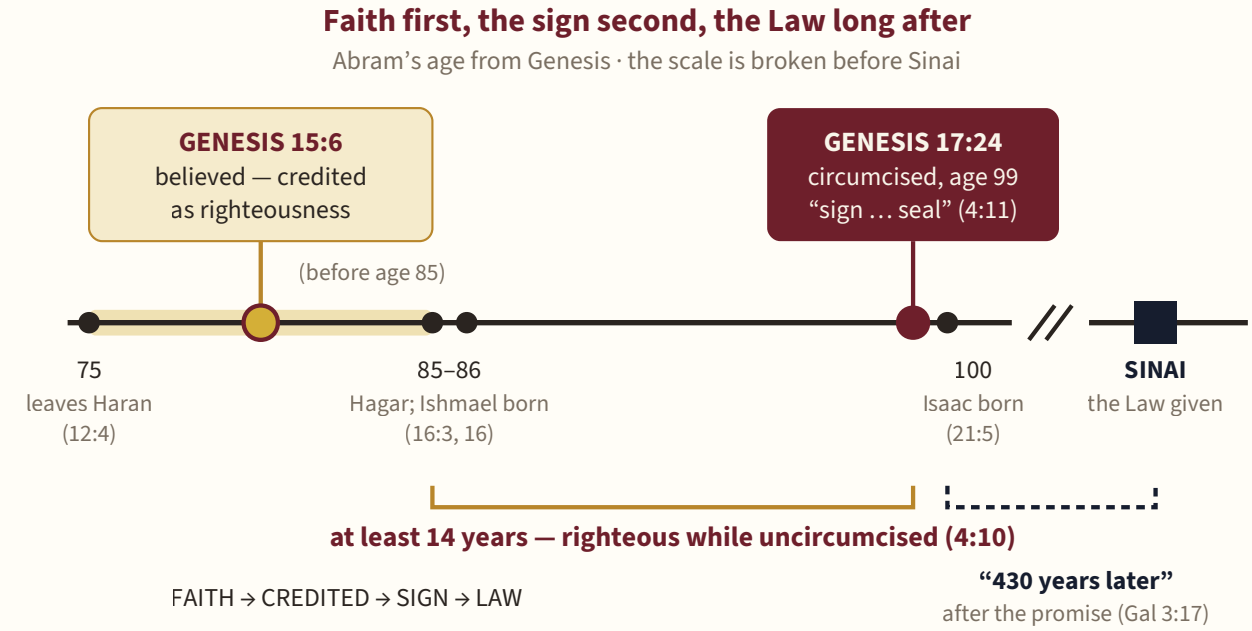
> [9] *Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."* [10] *How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;* [11] *and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all*

> *who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,* 12 *and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.*
>
> ROMANS 4:9–12

> *"And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you."*
>
> GENESIS 17:11

> *"Now Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin."*
>
> GENESIS 17:24

FIGURE · ABRAHAM'S CALENDAR



See the order Paul argues from: Abraham was counted righteous in Genesis 15, circumcised at least fourteen years later, and the Law came 430 years after the promise.

σημεῖον … σφραγῖδα

SĒMEION … SPHRAGIS · "THE SIGN … A SEAL" · G4592, G4973

Genesis 17:11 called circumcision a "sign" (*sēmeion*, G4592) of the covenant; Paul adds a second word, *sphragis* (G4973), the signet seal pressed in wax to authenticate a document already written. A seal does not create the contract; it certifies one that exists. Circumcision was "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised" — the stamp on a deed signed years earlier in Genesis 15. Paul uses *sphragis* again of the Corinthians as the "seal" of his apostleship (1 Corinthians 9:2): living proof of something God had already done.

τοῖς στοιχοῦσιν τοῖς ἴχνεσιν

TOIS STOICHOUSIN TOIS ICHNESIN · "WHO FOLLOW IN THE STEPS" · G4748, G2487

Stoicheō (G4748) is to walk in line, to keep in step, as soldiers in a file; *ichnos* (G2487) is a footprint. The word occurs three times in the New Testament (Romans 4:12; 2 Corinthians 12:18; 1 Peter 2:21 — "leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps"). Abraham's children are not identified by the mark on their bodies but by the footprints they walk in: his faith, "which he had while uncircumcised."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik makes the calendar do the arguing: Abraham was declared righteous in Genesis 15, and "He did not receive the covenant of circumcision until Genesis 17, which was at least 14 years later. Therefore his righteousness wasn't based on circumcision, but on faith." That means the phrase every Jew prized — "our father Abraham" — now belongs to anyone who believes. Paul, he says, throws out the old distinction, so that through faith all can say "our father Abraham." His one-line summary: "Faith, not circumcision, is the vital link to Abraham." The Gentile who believes is not a second-class heir; he is walking the path Abraham walked first.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's sermon "Abraham Justified Before Circumcision" lingers first on David's word "blessed" — not mere happiness but the light of God's face — and on imputation, which he insists "is not a legal fiction. Rather, it is a legal declaration." Then the timing: "God declared him just before he was ever circumcised." As a Presbyterian he uses the passage to explain signs and seals for baptism: "Abraham had faith before he was circumcised; Isaac had faith after he was circumcised." A sign points, like the rainbow; a seal guarantees, like a king's signet. But he draws the line hard: "The sacrament does not justify anybody." Faith is the sole instrument.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon, a Baptist, would part with Sproul on who should receive the sign, but not on this verse. Preaching Genesis 15:6 in 1868 ("Justification by Faith — Illustrated by Abram's Righteousness"), he states it flatly: "Abram was justified before he was circumcised," so no rite — he names baptism, confirmation and the Lord's Supper — can justify. And he refuses to let faith become a new work: "Faith cannot be its own righteousness, for it is of the very nature of faith to look out of self to Christ." In his exposition of the chapter he presses the same point on every hearer: "The vital question is not, 'How were we born?'" — but whether we believe God.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry notes two facts Paul builds on: Abraham was justified before he was circumcised and before the Law. On the first he writes that Abraham "is expressly said to be justified by faith fourteen years, some say twenty-five years, before he was circumcised." Circumcision was therefore not the cause of his righteousness but "a seal of the righteousness of the faith," and sacraments in general are "signs to represent and instruct, seals to ratify and confirm." So the true children of Abraham are "not those that sit in their chairs, and bear their names, but those that tread in their steps."

III
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 4:13–17

The Promise Is by Faith

Heir of the world — not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith

13 *For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was* ◷ *not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith*. 14 *For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified;* 15 *for* ⚠ *the Law brings about wrath*, *but where there is no law, there also is no violation.* 16 *For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be* △ *in accordance with grace*, *so that* ☆ *the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,* 17 *(as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God,* △ *who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist*.

ROMANS 4:13–17

"No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations."

GENESIS 17:5

"What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise."

GALATIANS 3:17

κληρονόμον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου

KLĒRONOMON AUTON EINAI KOSMOU · "HEIR OF THE WORLD" · G2818

Genesis promised Abraham a land, a seed and a blessing for all the families of the earth; Paul gathers it up as *klēronomos kosmou* (G2818), "heir of the world." An heir does not work for the estate; he receives it because of who he is to the father. That is why verse 14 says if "those who are of the Law are heirs," faith is "made void" (*kekenōtai*, emptied) and the promise "nullified" (*katērgētai*, put out of action). Paul will finish the thought in 8:17: "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ."

εἰς τὸ εἶναι βεβαίαν τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν

EIS TO EINAI BEBAIAN TĒN EPANGELIAN · "THE PROMISE GUARANTEED" · G949, G1860

Bebaios (G949) is firm footing — "solid enough to walk on," as one lexicon puts it — and it is the word for a legally valid, unbreakable instrument (Hebrews 9:17, a will in force). A promise that depended on Law-keeping would be only as firm as the weakest keeper. Resting on grace and received by faith, it is *bebaia* "to all the descendants." Verse 17 then names the God behind it: *tou zōopoiountos tous nekrous*, who "gives life to the dead" (*zōopoieō*, G2227), and calls *ta mē onta hōs onta*, "the things that are not as being."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik points out that the promises to Abraham came before the Law, so they cannot rest on it; they rest on God's declaration of Abraham's righteousness through faith. He quotes Newell: Abraham "became heir of the world on another principle entirely – simple faith." On "where there is no law there is no transgression" he cites Morris — transgression is "the right word for overstepping a line." Then he pairs grace with faith and sets both against merit, quoting Spurgeon: "Grace and faith are congruous, and will draw together in the same chariot." And of the God who calls what does not exist, he says He can count things that are not, like our righteousness, as if they were.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul takes "heir" to its root: "In terms of principal, the only proper heir of God the Father is God the Son," and we become joint heirs only by being joined to Him through faith. The Law cannot make heirs; it brings wrath, because sin is personal rebellion against the Lawgiver. Verse 16 is the Reformation in a sentence — *sola fide* so that it may be *sola gratia* — and its fruit is assurance: "If justification were according to law, you would have no certainty whatsoever." Faith here is not a leap in the dark. "Faith is ultimately trusting what is preeminently trustworthy" — the God who alone creates out of nothing and raises the dead.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's exposition of the chapter reads verses 13–16 as the second plank of Paul's argument: the inheritance came by the righteousness of faith, not by a Law given centuries after the promise. A Law-based inheritance would empty faith, because the Law works wrath and only reveals sin. It is of faith so that it may rest on grace, and every believer is a true heir of Abraham. In his notes on the verses that follow he calls faith "the root-grace," the stock from which the other graces grow — which is exactly why God hangs the promise on it rather than on our fruit.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry reads "heir of the world" Christologically: "Now Christ is the heir of the world, the ends of the earth are his possession, and it is in him that Abraham was so." A promise by Law would make faith void, for the Law worketh wrath — it irritates and provokes the carnal mind which is enmity to God. So God made it "of faith, that it might be by grace," and Henry gives the reason: "that grace might have the honour of it." Of the God who quickeneth the dead he says simply, "He that quickeneth the dead can do any thing, can give a child to Abraham when he is old."

IV
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 4:18–22

Hope Against Hope

He faced his own body, did not waver, grew strong, and was fully assured

18 *In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."* 19 *Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb;*

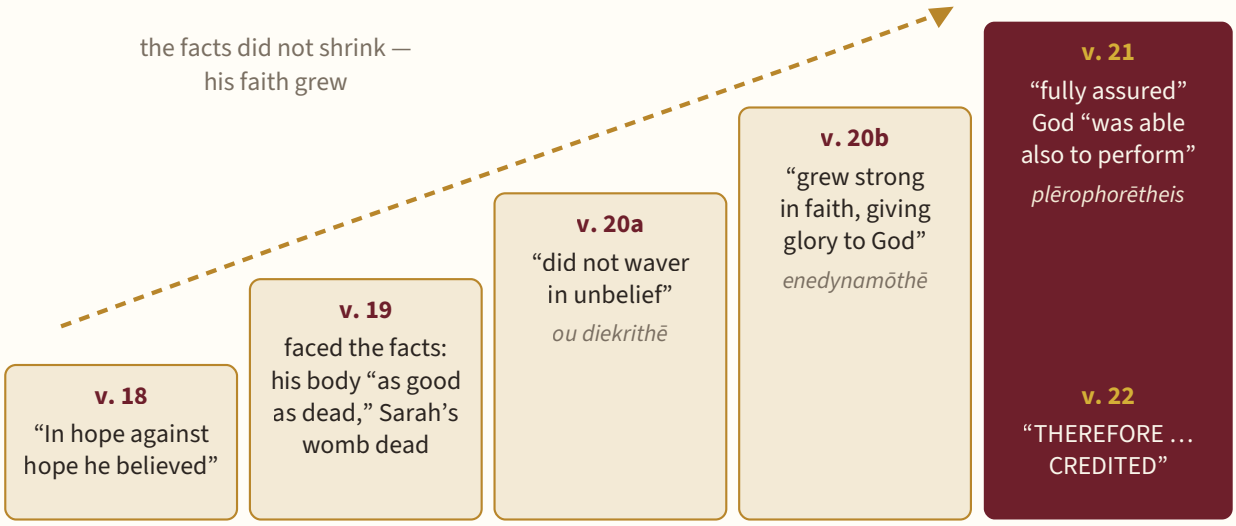
> [20] *yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,* [21] *and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.* [22] *Therefore* IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.
>
> ROMANS 4:18–22

> *"And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be.""*
>
> GENESIS 15:5

> *"So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him."*
>
> GENESIS 21:2

FIGURE · HOPE AGAINST HOPE

The anatomy of Abraham's faith · Romans 4:18–22



Climb the steps of verses 18–21: the obstacles stay the same size while Abraham's faith grows, until God credits it as righteousness.

παρ' ἐλπίδα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι · κατενόησεν

PAR' ELPIDA EP' ELPIDI · KATENOĒSEN · "HOPE AGAINST HOPE … HE CONTEMPLATED" · G1680, G2657

Two prepositions with the same noun: *para elpida*, beyond or against hope — every natural expectation said no — and *ep' elpidi*, resting on hope — God's word said yes. Then *katenoēsen* (G2657), to consider attentively, to fix the mind on. Here the manuscripts differ. The text NASB95 follows (SBLGNT and most critical editions) has no negative: he **contemplated** his body, now as good as dead — faith looked straight at the facts. The later Byzantine text (KJV, NKJV) reads *ou katenoēsen*, he "considered not" his body. Both readings land in the same place: the facts were real, and they did not decide the matter.

οὐ διεκρίθη … ἐνεδυναμώθη … πληροφορηθείς

OU DIEKRITHĒ … ENEDYNAMŌTHĒ … PLĒROPHORĒTHEIS · G1252, G1743, G4135

Diakrinō (G1252) can mean to judge between; in the New Testament it often means to be divided in oneself, to waver back and forth (James 1:6; Mark 11:23). Abraham was not split in two. Instead *enedynamōthē* (G1743, passive), "he was strengthened" — the strength came from outside him. And *plērophorētheis* (G4135), "fully assured," carried to full measure, used again in14:5, "Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind." Giving glory to God was not a separate act; trusting Him to do what He said was the glory.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

For Guzik, the life-giving God of verse 17 was at work in Abraham as he believed — "The power was evident naturally and spiritually." He notes the textual question in verse 19 and prefers the reading "he did not consider his own body" (his NKJV), meaning Abraham looked to the promise rather than at circumstances; NASB95 follows the other reading. He also notes that Abraham and Sarah still acted on the promise as husband and wife: "faith does not mean doing nothing, but doing everything with trust and reliance on God." And he notices a growth: "Abraham's faith was strong but it was also strengthened." His closing jab is for us: "Is your God too small?"

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul stands Abraham at about a hundred beside Sarah's barren womb and asks why he kept believing: because the One who promised was able to perform. He contrasts God's word with our broken promises and sets Mary's "let it be" beside Abraham's "yes." Faith is not credulity — "Faith is not believing the absurd" — it is trusting the God who alone creates from nothing and raises the dead. On verses 20–21 he quotes Abraham "fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform," and illustrates it with a dying friend, Deac, who held on to the promises of God at the end.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached verses 19–21 as "Unstaggering Faith" (No. 733, 1867). The long delay was God's method: "God will empty us of self completely before he will accomplish any great thing by us." He applies it to the worker who feels his weakness, to a church longing for revival, to the man pleading a promise, and to the seeker in despair — "for despair is the nearest way to faith in our philosophy." The definition is the one Abraham lived: "To believe God when everything gives him the lie — that is faith." And the result: "Abraham spake well of his God, and his God dealt well with him."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry measures the obstacle honestly: "There was a hope against him, a natural hope," yet he believed in a higher hope. He reads verse 19 with the KJV — "considered not his own body" — meaning his faith "passed by that consideration, and thought of nothing but the faithfulness of the promise." On "staggered not" he puts the blame where it belongs: "It is not the promise that fails, but our faith that fails when we stagger." Strong faith honors God: "Abraham's faith gave God the glory of his wisdom, power, holiness, goodness, and especially of his faithfulness," and his full persuasion "was built on the omnipotence of God."

V
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 4:23–25

Written for Our Sake Also

The same crediting for all who believe in Him who raised Jesus — delivered for our sins, raised for our justification

> 23 *Now not for his sake only was it written that it was* ⟲ *credited to him,* 24 ☆ *but for our sake also, to whom it will be* ⟲ *credited, as those who believe in* △ *Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,* 25 *He who was* ⚠ *delivered over because of our transgressions, and was* ☆ *raised because of our justification.*
>
> ROMANS 4:23–25

> *"But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed."*
>
> ISAIAH 53:5

ὃς παρεδόθη … καὶ ἠγέρθη

HOS PAREDOTHĒ … KAI ĒGERTHĒ · "DELIVERED OVER … RAISED" · G3860, G1453

Two passive verbs, and God is the actor in both. *Paradidōmi* (G3860) is to hand over — the word for Judas's betrayal, Pilate's sentence, and, in Romans 8:32, the Father who "delivered Him over for us all." Its echo is Isaiah 53, where the Greek Old Testament twice says the Servant "was delivered" (*paredothē*, 53:12). *Egeirō* (G1453) is to raise. Verse 24 makes the object of our faith the same as Abraham's — not a vague belief, but "Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead," the God who gives life to the dead (v. 17).

διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα … διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν

DIA TA PARAPTŌMATA … DIA TĒN DIKAIŌSIN · "BECAUSE OF OUR TRANSGRESSIONS … BECAUSE OF OUR JUSTIFICATION" · G3900, G1347

The same preposition, *dia* with the accusative, "because of," governs both lines. *Paraptōma* (G3900) is a false step, a fall beside the path. *Dikaiōsis* (G1347), "justification," the act of acquittal, appears only here and in 5:18. He was handed over because our sins required it; He was raised because our acquittal had been secured and must be announced. Read together, the cross pays and the empty tomb gives the receipt.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik says the record of Abraham's faith was written for us, and we are invited to follow him. On "delivered up" he cites Wuest: the judicial act of God the Father "delivering God the Son to the justice that required the payment" of the penalty for human sin. The resurrection, then, is not an add-on: it "has an essential place in our redemption because it demonstrates God the Father's perfect satisfaction." He quotes Lenski — "If death had held him, he would have failed" — and closes with Poole's verdict on verse 25: "This one verse is an abridgement of the whole gospel."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul took up verse 25 the following Sunday in "Faith Triumphs in Trouble (Part 1)." Double imputation — our sin to Christ, His righteousness to us — might seem enough, "But here Paul is saying that Christ was raised for our justification." He explains with a distinction: a creditor must accept cash for a money debt, but an offended party need not accept a substitute for a moral debt. The resurrection is the Father's answer — in effect, "I accept this payment for those debtors who cannot pay." So "If Jesus died on the cross for your sins and stayed dead, you would have no justification."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's exposition lands the chapter on the reader: what was written of Abraham was written for our instruction and comfort, and the same righteousness is reckoned to all who believe on the God who raised up Jesus our Lord. In a sermon on these verses, "Jesus Our Lord," he dwells on the title Paul gives the risen Christ and on the contrasts faith must hold together: "In the manger, in poverty, shame, and death, Jesus was still Lord." Faith does not stumble at that: "It is the part of Faith to accept great contrasts, if laid down in the Word."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry insists the story is a pattern, not just history: these things were recorded as precedents to direct us, and "The gospel way of justification is by an imputed righteousness." He reads verse 25 as the whole work of Christ in two strokes — He died "to make atonement for our sins, to expiate our guilt, to satisfy divine justice," and He rose "for the perfecting and completing of our justification." His closing sentence is a receipt in the Puritan style: "By the merit of his death he paid our debt, in his resurrection he took out our acquittance."

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

Abraham's faith from Genesis to James, and the exchange at the cross

> *"Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."*
>
> GENESIS 15:6

> *"Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham."*
>
> GALATIANS 3:6–7

> *"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God."*
>
> JAMES 2:21–23

> *"By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE."*
>
> HEBREWS 11:11–12

> *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*
>
> 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

> *"As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities."*
>
> ISAIAH 53:11

> *"He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type."*
>
> HEBREWS 11:19

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul refuses a "forked tongue" Bible in which Paul and James contradict each other. Paul quotes Genesis 15, where Abraham is declared righteous before God; James quotes Genesis 22, decades later, where Abraham's offering of Isaac shows that his faith was real. *Dikaioō* can mean to declare righteous or to show to be righteous, as Jesus said wisdom is shown right by what it produces. Paul answers how a sinner is accepted; James answers what kind of faith accepts. Justification is by faith alone, "but not by a faith that is alone."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's 1868 sermon on Genesis 15:6 keeps faith from becoming a meritorious work: "Faith justifies, but not in and by itself, but because it grasps the obedience of Christ." And he refuses to make it complicated — "Abram did what? Believed the promise — that was all."

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four men, one chapter. Guzik walks the text clause by clause; Sproul defends imputation and the Reformation *solas*; Spurgeon presses the promise on sinners and seekers; Henry gathers it into Puritan sentences you can carry home.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · Credited	Justification is God counting us righteous, not making us perfect; not because of ungodliness but despite it.	Abraham is exhibit A; Paul and James agree; Christ's righteousness counted for you, or no gospel.	God justifies the ungodly — a miracle worthy of God; come just as you are.	"What saith the scripture?" Man cannot make God his debtor; pardoned people are the only blessed.
II · Before the sign	Circumcision came at least fourteen years later; faith, not circumcision, links us to Abraham.	Declared just before circumcision; signs point, seals guarantee, and no sacrament justifies anybody.	Abram justified before circumcised; faith looks out of self to Christ; not "How were we born?"	Fourteen years before the sign; Abraham's true children tread in his steps, not his chairs.
III · Promise	Promise came before Law; heir by "simple faith"; grace and faith ride one chariot.	The Son is the only proper heir; we are joint heirs; Law-based justification gives no certainty.	Inheritance by faith so it rests on grace; faith is the root-grace of all the rest.	Christ is heir of the world and Abraham in Him; by faith so grace has the honour.
IV · Hope	Faith is doing everything with trust in God; strong, and also strengthened. Is your God too small?	Faith is not believing the absurd; it trusts the One able to perform what He promised.	God empties us of self first; to believe God when everything gives Him the lie.	Not the promise but our faith fails when we stagger; strong faith gives God glory.
V · For us	Delivered judicially, raised to show the Father's satisfaction; verse 25 abridges the whole gospel.	Raised for our justification: the Father's receipt — "I accept this payment."	Written for us; Jesus is Lord in manger and tomb alike; faith holds the contrasts.	His death paid our debt; His resurrection took out our acquittance.

ROMANS 4:1–25 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **One verb, eleven times.** *Logizomai* — credited, credits, take into account — is the spine of the chapter (vv. 3–11, 22–24). Paul argues like an accountant: what is entered, and who enters it. THE GREEK
- **Counted righteous, not made perfect.** "Our justification is not God making us perfectly righteous, but counting us as perfectly righteous." Change follows, but it is not the ground. GUZIK
- **God justifies the ungodly — not the improved.** *Ton asebē* (v. 5): the man with no fear of God. "The sinner is the gospel's reason for existence." SPURGEON
- **Wages and gifts cannot share a column.** Verse 4: a wage is entered "as what is due," never "as a favor." If you earned it, God owes you; "it is impossible for man … to make God a debtor to him." HENRY
- **Paul and James are answering different questions.** Paul (Gen 15): how is a sinner declared righteous? James (Gen 22): what kind of faith is real? "Justification is by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone." SPROUL
- **The sign came after the substance.** Credited in Genesis 15, circumcised at ninety-nine in Genesis 17 — at least fourteen years later — and the Law 430 years after the promise (Gal 3:17). THE TEXT

- **Abraham's children are known by footprints.** *Stoicheō … ichnesin* (v. 12): to walk in step in his tracks — "not those that sit in their chairs, … but those that tread in their steps." HENRY
- **Faith looked at the facts and did not flinch.** NASB's text says Abraham "contemplated" his dead body; the KJV tradition says he "considered not." Either way the facts were real and did not decide the matter. THE GREEK
- **Strength came from outside.** *Enedynamōthē* is passive: Abraham "was strengthened." Spurgeon: God "will empty us of self completely before he will accomplish any great thing by us." SPURGEON
- **The empty tomb is the receipt.** Raised "because of our justification" (v. 25): the Father's public acceptance of the payment. "If Jesus died … and stayed dead, you would have no justification." SPROUL

† Questions for the Table

1 **If God kept a wage ledger on you, what would you be owed? Why is verse 4 bad news and verse 5 good news?**

A wage is entered "as what is due"; a gift only "as a favor." The one who stops working for it is the one who receives it.

4:4-5; Ephesians 2:8-9

2 **David most likely wrote Psalm 32 after his adultery and murder. What does it tell you that Paul chose him as the second witness?**

"Pardoned people are the only blessed people" — the king's blessing was not innocence but sin not counted.

4:6-8; Psalm 32:1-5

3 **What "circumcision" are you tempted to trust — baptism, church membership, a clean record, a year sober — as if it made you right with God?**

The seal certified a righteousness Abraham already had by faith. Signs point; only Christ justifies.

4:9-12; Galatians 5:6

4 **Abraham "contemplated his own body, now as good as dead." What fact in your life looks as good as dead, and what promise of God speaks to it?**

Faith does not deny the facts; it refuses to let them have the last word over God's word.

4:18-21; Hebrews 11:11-12

5 **"He grew strong in faith" is passive — he was strengthened. Where do you need strength you cannot produce, and how does giving God glory feed it?**

God empties us of self before He fills us; trusting Him to perform is itself the glory we give Him.

4:20-21; 2 Corinthians 12:9

6 **Why does Paul say Jesus was raised "because of our justification"? What would be missing if the tomb were still sealed?**

The cross paid; the resurrection is the Father's receipt — "I accept this payment for those debtors who cannot pay."

4:24-25; 1 Corinthians 15:17

Abraham had nothing to bring but a promise he believed, and God wrote "righteous" in his column before he had a mark on his body or a Law in his hand. The same ledger is open for us, and it was written "for our sake also." The Lord was delivered over for our transgressions and raised because of our justification — the debt is paid, the receipt is the empty tomb, and the only thing left to do is believe Him.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry died in 1714 having reached Acts; the Romans volume of his *Commentary* was completed by his successors (John Evans) from his notes and method, and is cited under his name as it is published. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

- Guzik, Enduring Word — Romans 4 — https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/romans-4/
- Sproul, "Abraham Justified by Faith" (Rom 4:1–8, 8 Jan 2006) — https://learn.ligonier.org/sermons/abraham-justified-faith
- Sproul, "Abraham Justified Before Circumcision" (Rom 4:5–12, 15 Jan 2006) — https://learn.ligonier.org/sermons/abraham-justified-circumcision
- Sproul, "The Promise Granted Through Faith" (Rom 4:13–25, 22 Jan 2006) — https://learn.ligonier.org/sermons/promise-granted-faith
- Sproul, "Faith Triumphs in Trouble (Part 1)" (Rom 4:23–5:5, 29 Jan 2006) — https://learn.ligonier.org/sermons/faith-triumphs-trouble-part-1
- Ligonier scripture index, Romans 4 — https://learn.ligonier.org/scripture/romans-4
- Spurgeon, All of Grace — "God Justifieth the Ungodly" — https://ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/grace/grace.iv.html
- Spurgeon, No. 844 "Justification by Faith — Illustrated by Abram's Righteousness" (Gen 15:6, 1868) — https://biblehub.com/library/spurgeon/spurgeons_sermons_volume_14_1868/justification_by_faithillustrated_by_abrams.htm
- Spurgeon, No. 733 "Unstaggering Faith" (Rom 4:19–21, 1867) — https://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/unstaggering-faith
- Spurgeon, exposition of Romans 4 — https://sermonindex.net/commentary/spurgeon/ROM/4
- Spurgeon, "Jesus Our Lord" (Rom 4:23–25, Biblical Illustrator) — https://biblehub.com/sermons/pub/jesus_our_lord.htm
- Matthew Henry, Commentary — Romans 4 — https://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc6.Rom.v.html
- NASB95 Genesis 15 — https://biblehub.com/nasb95/genesis/15.htm
- NASB95 Genesis 16 — https://biblehub.com/nasb95/genesis/16.htm
- NASB95 Genesis 17 — https://biblehub.com/nasb95/genesis/17.htm
- NASB95 Genesis 21 — https://biblehub.com/nasb95/genesis/21.htm
- NASB95 Psalm 32 — https://biblehub.com/nasb95/psalms/32.htm
- NASB95 Isaiah 53 — https://biblehub.com/nasb95/isaiah/53.htm
- NASB95 2 Corinthians 5 — https://biblehub.com/nasb95/2_corinthians/5.htm
- NASB95 Galatians 3 — https://biblehub.com/nasb95/galatians/3.htm
- NASB95 Hebrews 11 — https://biblehub.com/nasb95/hebrews/11.htm
- NASB95 James 2 — https://biblehub.com/nasb95/james/2.htm
- Strong's G3049 λογίζομαι — https://biblehub.com/greek/3049.htm
- Strong's G3783 ὀφείλημα — https://biblehub.com/greek/3783.htm
- Strong's G765 ἀσεβής — https://biblehub.com/greek/765.htm
- Strong's G4973 σφραγίς — https://biblehub.com/greek/4973.htm
- Strong's G2487 ἴχνος — https://biblehub.com/greek/2487.htm
- Strong's G949 βέβαιος — https://biblehub.com/greek/949.htm
- Strong's G2227 ζωοποιέω — https://biblehub.com/greek/2227.htm
- Strong's G2657 κατανοέω — https://biblehub.com/greek/2657.htm
- Strong's G1252 διακρίνω — https://biblehub.com/greek/1252.htm
- Strong's G4135 πληροφορέω — https://biblehub.com/greek/4135.htm
- Strong's G3860 παραδίδωμι — https://biblehub.com/greek/3860.htm
- Strong's G1347 δικαίωσις — https://biblehub.com/greek/1347.htm

Scripture: New American Standard Bible® (NASB), © 1960–1995 The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. Greek: SBL Greek New Testament; Strong's numbers per biblehub.com. · Smith For Christ Publishing · Ed Smith