

# ABRAHAM: THE EXAMPLE OF A MAN JUSTIFIED BY FAITH ALONE

## ROMANS 04:17–25

### *Introduction*

Abraham is the prime example or pattern that a person is justified by faith and by faith alone.

- I. The source of Abraham's faith (v. 17).
- II. The strength of Abraham's faith (vv. 18-22).
- III. The recording of Abraham's faith (vv. 23-25).

### **I. *Romans 04:17 Source of Faith***

The source of Abraham's faith was God and God alone. Note three points.

1. It was God Himself whom Abraham believed: "I have made you a father of many nations" (v.17; see Gen.17:1-5, esp. 4-5). Abraham had never had a son, not by Sarah. He was now about one hundred years old, and Sarah was close to the same age. They were both well beyond the years of having a son. Just think about it for a moment and the impossibility is clearly realized. If Abraham was ever to have a son, the son would have to come from God. God would have to be the source, for only God could do such an impossible thing. And note: despite the impossibility Abraham *believes God*. The source of Abraham's faith was God.

***Mark 11:22*** "Have faith in God," Jesus answered.

***Heb 11:6*** And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

2. It was the God who gives life to the dead whom Abraham believed. The source of Abraham's faith was...
  - the living and true God: the God who is omnipotent, possessing all power, the power to breathe life into *dead matter*.

The source of Abraham's faith was God: God who has the power to quicken, make alive, revive, animate, rejuvenate and animate what is dead. No matter how impossible the promise seemed, God was able to fulfil it because *He is God*, the One who possesses all power (omnipotent). God is able to give life and resurrect the dead; therefore, He is able to fulfil His promise.

***John 5:24-25*** "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live."

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**John 6:40** “For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

**Acts 24:15** And I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

**1 Cor 15:22** For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

**2 Cor 4:14** Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.

3. It was the God who creates who was the source of Abraham’s faith. Because God is God, that is, omnipotent, He is able to create. He can make something *out of nothing*. He needs nothing to create. He can speak things into existence just as He did when He created the world (Gen. 1:1, 3). Abraham believed this; he believed that if it was necessary God could create life in the organs of his and Sarah’s bodies. Abraham trusted and believed the promise of God. God was the source of his faith.

**Thought 1.** Note a fact often overlooked. Every promise made by God is a promise that only He can fulfil. He is not needed if man can meet and do whatever is needed. Therefore, if a man puts his faith in men, then all the hopes and promises that extend beyond this life will not be met. No man can fulfil the hope and promise of salvation from sin, death and hell. No man can fulfil the promise that we shall be “the heirs of the world,” that we shall receive eternal life in the new heavens and earth (see v. 13). Only God can fulfil the impossible promise of eternal life.

**1 Th 4:16** For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

**Mat 19:26** Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

**Luke 1:37** “For nothing is impossible with God.”

**Job 42:2** “I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.”

## II. **Romans 04: 18-22 Strength of Abraham’s Faith**

The strength of Abraham’s faith. Note two very significant lessons.

1. Abraham’s faith was in *what God said*, the promise of a descendant or of a son. He had nothing else to go on but God’s Word: “just as it had been said to him.”

The phrase “against all hope, Abraham in hope believed” means that Abraham was past hope, beyond all human help and any possibility of having a son. His situation was beyond hope, yet he believed God; he placed his hope in God and in what God had said.

- a. Abraham was not weak in faith despite thinking about his own physical inability. His body was “good as dead”; he and Sarah were about one hundred years old. The word “*dead*” is a perfect participle in the Greek which means that his reproductive organs had stopped functioning and were dead forever and could never again function. Abraham could never have a son; it was not humanly possible. He and Sarah were almost one hundred years old, now sexually “dead.”

Abraham thought about the matter. The phrase “faced the fact” (*katanoeo*) means he fixed his thoughts, his mind, his attention upon the matter. But he did not give in to the thoughts. He was not weak in faith.

**Thought 1.** Just imagine the *personal relationship* Abraham must have had with God! To know God so well — loving and trusting God so strongly — that God could give him an experience so meaningful that Abraham would believe the promise without even staggering in faith.

**Isa 43:10** “*You are my witnesses,*” declares the LORD, “*and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.*”

**Deu 6:5** *Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

**Deu 10:12-13** *And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord’s commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?*

- b. Abraham was strong in faith — not wavering regarding the promise of God. Instead he walked about glorifying and praising God for His glorious promise. The word “wavering” (*diakrino*) means he did not stagger, did not vacillate, did not question God’s ability to fulfil His promise.
- c. Abraham was fully convinced of God’s ability and God’s power. He knew God could overcome the difficulty of his body being “dead,” and he believed God could and would either...
- quicken and give life to his body, or
  - recreate his reproductive organs (v. 17).

He did not know what method God would use, but he knew God was able to do what He had promised. Abraham believed God; he was fully persuaded that the promise would be fulfilled.

**Luke 3:8** “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.”

**Acts 27:25** So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.

**Rom 4:20-21** Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

**Deu 7:9** Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.

**Deu 31:19** “Now write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them.”

**Psa 37:5** Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this.

**Prov 3:5** Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

**Isa 26:3** You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.

**Jer 17:7** “But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.”

2. Abraham’s faith was credited as righteousness (See *Credited*, Rom. 4:22; *Justification*, Rom. 4:22).

### ROMANS 04: 22 CREDITED, IMPUTED (ELOGISTHE)

Credited means to reckon, to impute, to credit, to count, to compute, to ascribe, to deposit, to put to one’s account. Abraham’s faith was counted for righteousness. Abraham deposited his faith with God, and God credited Abraham’s faith as righteousness. □

### ROMANS 04: 22

#### JUSTIFICATION: FAITH, RIGHTEOUSNESS

*This is why “it is credited to him as righteousness.” Romans 04:22*

In simple terms *justification* means that God takes the believer’s faith and counts it as righteousness (Rom. 4:3; see Gen. 15:6)

When a person *really believes* that Jesus Christ is *his Saviour*, God takes that person's faith and counts it for righteousness (Rom. 4:3, 5, 9, 11, 22, 24). The person is not righteous; he has no righteousness of his own. He is still imperfect, still sinful, still corruptible, still short of God's glory as a sinful human being. But he does believe that Jesus Christ *is his Saviour*. Such belief honours God's Son (whom God loves very much), and because it honours God's Son, God accepts that person's faith for righteousness. God counts that person's faith as righteousness. Therefore, that person becomes acceptable to God. A person's belief — the right kind of belief — is critical.

**Gen 15:6** *Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

**Rom 5:1** *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**Gal 3:6** *Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

**1 Cor 6:11** *And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

**Phil 3:9** *And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. □*

### **III. Romans 04: 23–25 Faith of Abraham**

The recording of Abraham's faith is for two purposes.

1. That men might read the account. It was not recorded just to honour Abraham as a great man. It was written so that we might read and understand how we are to become acceptable to God.

**John 20:31** *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

**1 John 1:1-3** *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

**Luke 1:3-4** *Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*

2. That men might be counted righteous by believing. It is necessary to believe two things. (See *Justification through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, Rom. 4:25.)
  - a. That God raised Jesus our Lord from the dead (see *Justification through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, Rom. 4:25; *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, Acts 1:3; *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, Acts 2:24).
  - b. That Jesus died for our sins and was raised for our justification (see *Christ Fulfills Law, Sin*, Rom 8:3; *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, Acts 1:3.) ■

**ROMANS 04:25 JUSTIFICATION THROUGH  
THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST**

*He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. **Romans 4:25***

Christ was delivered to death for our sins and raised again for our justification. He offered Himself as an *atonement* or *propitiation* for our sin. Atonement or propitiation means sacrifice, covering. (See notes, Rom. 3:25; 1 Jn. 2:1-2.) Christ offered Himself as our sacrifice, as our substitute, as the covering for our sins. God accepted the offering and the sacrifice of His life for us. The resurrection proves it.

1. The resurrection shouts loudly and clearly that God is satisfied with the settlement for sin which Christ made.
2. The resurrection declares the believer justified, free from sin, and righteous in God's eyes. (See *Credited*, Rom. 4:22; *Justification and Peace*, Rom. 5:1. See Rom. 4:5; 4:1-3; 4:1-25.)

**Acts 2:23-24** *This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.*

**Acts 2:31-32** *Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.*

**Acts 10:39-41** *"We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen — by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."*

**Acts 13:30** *But God raised him from the dead.*

**Rom 1:4** *And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Eph 1:20-21** *Which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. □*

### ACTS 01:03 RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

*After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. Acts 01:03*

Jesus appeared at least ten times after His resurrection before He ascended into heaven. There were apparently many more appearances not recorded (see Jn. 20:30-31; 21:25).

1. He appeared to Mary Magdalene (Mk. 16:9-11; Jn.20:11-18).
2. He appeared to the women running to tell the disciples about the empty tomb (Mt. 28:8-10)
3. He appeared to Peter, probably to assure him of his restoration (Lk. 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5).
4. He appeared to the two Emmaus disciples sometime in the early evening (Mk. 16:12; Lk. 24:13-42).
5. He appeared to the disciples with Thomas absent (Mk. 16:14; Lk.24:36-43; Jn. 20:19-25).
6. One week later, He appeared to the disciples who had gone fishing (Jn. 20).
7. He appeared to 500 believers (1 Cor. 15:6).
8. He appeared to the apostles (Mt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:15-18).
9. He appeared to James, the Lord's half-brother (1 Cor. 15:7).
10. He appeared to the believers at His ascension (Mk. 16:19-20; Lk. 24:44-53; Acts 1:3-12).

It should be remembered that since Jesus' ascension He has appeared at least two other times.

1. He appeared to Stephen at his martyrdom (Acts 7:55-56).
2. He appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3f). □

## ACTS 02:24 RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

*But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. Acts 02:24*

This is a great verse dealing with the resurrection of Christ. Note three points.

1. God raised up Christ. God knew that the very best way to save man from death was through the resurrection of His own Son from the dead.
2. The resurrection of Christ freed “him from the agony of death.” The word *agony* (*odinas*) means birth pangs. For the unbeliever, there is great pain in death, pain such as that experienced by a woman in giving birth. But man no longer has to suffer the pain of death nor fear suffering through it. Christ has conquered and abolished death, made it completely harmless. Death is actually the most glorious and joyful experience for the believer, an experience that simply explodes human imagination. (See Jn. 5:24; Heb. 2:14-15.)
3. It was impossible for death to hold Christ. Why? There are several significant reasons.
  - a. There was God’s set purpose and foreknowledge. God knew that the way of the cross and resurrection was the very best way to save the world. Therefore, nothing could stop God from following through with the death and resurrection of His Son. (See Acts 2:25-28.)
  - b. Jesus was approved by God. He had God’s approval, sanction, accreditation and endorsement. Jesus Christ was perfectly acceptable to God (see Acts. 2:22-24).
  - c. Jesus’ resurrection was foretold by Scripture, and Scripture must be fulfilled.
  - d. Jesus was *Life* itself. He possesses the very *being, essence, quality, substance* and *energy* of life. He is *The Life*, Life itself; therefore, He is the source of all life. All life finds its source in the energy and being of Christ Himself. Therefore, being Life, death could not engulf Him any more than darkness can engulf light. (See Jn. 1:4-5; Jn. 14:6.)
  - e. Jesus was sinless. Death exists or happens because everything is short of perfection — short of what it should be — short of *God’s glory*. This is true of man. Man dies because he falls “short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Sin is...
    - falling short
    - missing the mark
    - transgressing God’s glory



And it is sin that causes death. Therefore Jesus Christ, being sinless, did not have to die. He died because He *willed* to die for man.

The point is this: Jesus was sinless and perfect and righteous (Jn. 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:9; 2:22). He was the Ideal Man, the Sinless Man, the Perfect Man — the Ideal Pattern for all other men. Therefore, when He died for men, He died as the Ideal Man or the Ideal Pattern. And death cannot hold the Ideal Man, for the Ideal Man came short in nothing. He was not short in life; therefore, He was destined to live forever. He was Perfect Life and Perfect Man. As the Scripture says, “It was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.” (See Rom. 1:4.) □

### ROMANS 08: 03

#### JESUS CHRIST FULFILS THE LAW AND CONDEMNS SIN

*For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man. **Romans 08:03***

Christ condemned sin in the sinful man in the flesh by three acts.

1. Christ pointed to sin and condemned it as being evil. The very fact that He never sinned points out that sin is contrary to God and to God’s nature. Christ rejected sin, and by rejecting it He showed that it was evil, that it was not to be touched. He condemned it as evil and unworthy of God and man.
2. Christ secured righteousness for all men. When He came into the world, He came with the same human nature, the same flesh that all men are born with — the same human nature, the same flesh with all its desires, passions and potential for evil. However, He never sinned, not once. Therefore, He secured a perfect righteousness; and because His righteousness is perfect and ideal, it becomes the model and pattern for all men. It stands for and covers the unrighteousness of all men. His perfect righteousness overcomes sin and its penalty — it condemns sin. It is to be noted that He condemned sin “in sinful man, in his flesh;” therefore, all flesh finds its perfection and ideal in His righteousness and perfection. All flesh finds its power to condemn sin “in Christ,” in His ideal righteousness.

**John 8:46** “Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me?”

**Heb 4:15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.

**Heb 7:26** *Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

**Heb 9:14** *How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

**1 Pet 1:19** *But with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

**2 Cor 5:21** *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**1 Pet 2:22** *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”*

**1 John 3:5** *But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.*

3. Christ allowed the law of sin and death to be enacted upon Him instead of upon the sinner. Man has sinned, so the natural consequence is corruption and death. However, Christ approached God and made two requests. First, He asked God to accept His *Ideal righteousness* for the unrighteousness of man. Second, He asked God to lay man’s sin and death upon Himself. He asked God to let Him bear the law of sin and death for man and to experience hell for man. He asked God to let Him condemn sin and death “in His body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24). He was the perfect, ideal Man. Therefore, He could bear all the violations of the law and all the experiences of death for *all* men. God so purposed, and God bore the awful price of having to condemn sin and death in the death of His very own Son. Sin and its power have been made powerless. Death has been conquered (1 Cor. 15:1-58, esp. vs. 54-57), and he who had the power of death has been destroyed, that is, Satan. (See *Satan*, Jn. 16:11)

**Rom 5:6** *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.*

**Rom 5:8** *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

**1 Cor 15:3** *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.*

**2 Cor 5:15** *And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

**Gal 3:13** *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”*

**Titus 2:14** *Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

**Heb 2:9** *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

**Heb 9:28** *So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

**1 Pet 2:24** *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

**1 Pet 3:18** *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

**1 John 3:16** *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. □*