

## Romans 4:18-25

<sup>18</sup>Hoping beyond what he could expect, he believed that he would become the father of many nations, just as he was told: “This is how many your descendants will be.” <sup>19</sup>He did not weaken in faith, even though he considered his own body as good as dead (because he was about one hundred years old), and even though he considered Sarah’s womb to be dead. <sup>20</sup>He did not waver in unbelief with respect to God’s promise, but he grew strong in faith, giving glory to God <sup>21</sup>and being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. <sup>22</sup>This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.”

<sup>23</sup>Now the statement “it was credited to him” was not written for him alone, <sup>24</sup>but also for us to whom it would be credited, namely, to us who believe in the one who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead. <sup>25</sup>He was handed over to death because of our trespasses and was raised to life because of our justification.

### Righteousness Credited

#### I.

Twenty-five years chasing a dream. It’s a long time to wait to see your dreams fulfilled—to see a *promise* fulfilled. In fact, the promise had not been all that feasible when it was first made, but he believed it anyway. There was no time-frame given. Perhaps he initially believed it would happen almost immediately—that one promise would be connected with the other and he would see some results very, very soon.

It was not to be.

75-years-old he was when the promise was first made. He was to leave his homeland and take up residence elsewhere. He would be a father, and a huge number of descendants would follow. Those two promises seemed so related that one could surely expect them to be quickly fulfilled together.

Abraham and Sarah set off for their new homeland. In due course, they arrived. Abraham had believed the promise of a son, despite its implausibility. He was 75 when the promise was first made, and Sarah was 65.

Sure, Sarah was beyond the typical childbearing years, but it was *God* who made the promise, after all. “Hoping beyond what he could expect, he believed that he would become the father of many nations, just as he was told: “This is how many your descendants will be” (Romans 4:18, EHV). With God, even a 65-year-old woman could give birth.

But God had never given Abraham a time frame on his promises. The years rolled on. The older you get, the more quickly those years seem to reel off. The older a woman gets, the less likely it is that she can have a baby.

Ten years went by. As Sarah got closer and closer to 75, the logic became inescapable. It was not humanly possible for Sarah to become a mother. It was not unheard of to chose a surrogate parent. Abraham and Sarah *must* have misunderstood what God meant with his promises. Abraham fathered a child through a surrogate, trying to “help” God’s promises along.

#### II.

Do *you* ever have doubts? About God? About his promises to you? Do *you* ever try to “help” God’s promises along?

God has promised to be there with you. Sometimes it doesn’t feel as though he is there,

or as though he cares.

You work as hard as you can to make a go of things, but situations beyond your control cause your business to fail, or your job opportunities to dry up. Where is God? Where are his promises?

You bring your child to Christian Day School. You make every effort to follow Paul's advise to raise your children "in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, EHV), but they wander; they rebel. You wonder where you might have gone wrong. You wonder: "Where is God? Where are his promises?"

You make every effort to keep yourself healthy and to be responsible with everything you are and have, but then an unexpected illness robs you of every plan you have made. Where is God? Where are his promises?

Maybe you start to think you have been doing it all wrong. Maybe you need to find a different church. Maybe you need to pray more. Maybe these things are happening because you haven't sufficiently shown God your zeal for him by your life. Try a little harder to show God you are a good Christian and maybe these things will go away. Maybe *then* God will come, and all your problems will go away—everything will be fine again.

### III.

Sometimes you just have to face the facts.

For Abraham and Sarah, 14 more years went by. Nothing. No son born to Sarah. There was simply no way. She was now 89 and Abraham was 99. They were both past the normal life-span for their day, let alone childbearing years.

"He did not weaken in faith, even though he considered his own body as good as dead (because he was about one hundred years old), and even though he considered Sarah's womb to be dead. <sup>20</sup>He did not waver in unbelief with respect to God's promise, but he grew strong in faith, giving glory to God <sup>21</sup>and being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised" (Romans 4:19-21, EHV).

Abraham had to face the facts. All those years of waiting taught him a few things. *God* did not waver in his promise. *Abraham* had wondered if he had heard things wrong. *Abraham* wondered whether he had understood God correctly. *Abraham* had occasionally grown impatient. *God* never wavered. *God* never changed.

Notice what Paul reports: Abraham "grew strong in faith." A total of 24 years had gone by since the promise was first given that Abraham would be the father of a son who would be the ancestor of the Savior. Abraham knew he *needed* a Savior. Though he couldn't be said to always fully *understand* God's promises, he knew that those promises were sure. His faith grew, even as the promise grew more and more implausible.

Isaac, the son who had been promised to Abraham was born. His mother was 90 when he was born. His father was 100. God kept his promise, implausible and impossible though it was.

Abraham believed, even though he and Sarah were as good as dead, humanly speaking. Abraham grew *stronger* in his faith in God's promises, even though his faith should have waned, humanly speaking. "This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness'" (Romans 4:22, EHV).

Isaac, just like his father Abraham, was merely one more in a long line of ancestors of Jesus, the Savior whom God was promising all along. Both Abraham and Isaac had to peer so far into the future they could not even begin to imagine all the twists and turns the promise would take before God would finally bring it to completion.

25 years was *nothing* in the overall scheme of God's ultimate promise.

"It was *credited* to him as righteousness." It was God's grace to Abraham that gave him the faith to believe the promises. It was God's grace to Abraham that "credited" him with righteousness.

The same is true for you and me. "Now the statement 'it was credited to him' was not written for him alone, <sup>24</sup>but also for us to whom it would be credited, namely, to us who believe in the one who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead. <sup>25</sup>He was handed over to death because of our trespasses and was raised to life because of our justification" (Romans 4:23-25, EHV).

Our own efforts to keep God's law never work out. Our doubts of God and his promises leave us spiritually weakened, even spiritually bankrupt.

Jesus did it all. He kept the law perfectly on our behalf. He died as a substitute for us—offering his life and his body as the perfect sacrifice we needed to make us right before God.

Jesus is God. Jesus is perfectly righteous. It is *that* righteousness that was credited to Abraham's account, and *is* credited to the account of each one of us. Jesus has done it all. We receive credit.

#### IV.

Righteousness credited. We have no right to have ever expected it. But we have it.

What a relief! What love God the Father has demonstrated to us! He sent Jesus to buy righteousness for us. What love God the Son has demonstrated for us! He sacrificed himself so that we could be credited with righteousness.

"[Abraham] did not waver in unbelief with respect to God's promise, but he grew strong in faith, giving glory to God <sup>21</sup>and being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised" (Romans 4:20-21, EHV).

Keep growing in your faith as Abraham did. Look at God's promises from the past; learn from them and grow from them. As implausible as some of those promises may seem, God has kept every single one of them.

While the cares and worries of life will sometimes seem overwhelming, God is still there. Remember that he has already overcome every obstacle. He will continue to be with you. Have trust that God will carry you through.

God bless you as you live the life of one who has been credited with righteousness. Amen.