

The Heart of Christian Faith

Romans 4:22-25

As we look back over the verses leading up to this last section of Romans 4, Paul has demonstrated that faith is at the heart of Christian Salvation.

We are not saved by works; we are not saved by circumcision or by being Jewish; and we are not saved by Law; for Abraham was not saved by any of these.

As verse 16 says, by *faith* that it might be by grace.

That is what Abraham found as his faith was credited for righteousness.

And so now we see the same thing for all of his children – all who believe!

Paul concludes that the same object of faith is shared with Abraham, for He looked to the same gospel, looked to the same Savior who would come into the world to save sinners.

Jesus said in John 8, “Abraham saw my day, and rejoiced”.

Here in Romans 4:22-25, Paul sums everything up in the same salvation of Abraham, and joins us – that is, we who believe – in the same redemption by the death of Christ.

Think of that for a moment. You stand in the same place, the same salvation, the same love that Abraham, the friend of God, stood and enjoyed.

The Apostle Paul, the Apostle to us Gentiles, with big and great gospel arms, *unites* us all, Jew and Gentile believers, in one Christian salvation.

Notice here seven unions in this last part of Romans 4.

First, we have the *same promise* revealed to us as to Abraham. Paul says, not for his sake only was it written, but for our sakes also (verse 23).

Your God had an eye on the whole church, the family of God, of Jews and Gentiles, from the very beginning when Abraham was called and his faith and life placed before us way back in Genesis.

Second, we have the *same justification* by righteousness credited as father Abraham enjoyed – see verse 24, “but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited”.

This has been the concern of the whole chapter, hasn't it. Here is this righteousness apart from the law, which has always been the way of salvation.

Third, we are *united* to the God who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead – see verse 24b.

Like Abraham, our faith is in this gracious God who so loved the whole world that He gave us His Son.

Like Abraham later, willing and ready to sacrifice his only begotten Isaac, so our heavenly Father gave his best in the Son of God to become man, made of a woman, made under the law, to bear the curse of the law.

Fourth, God the Father and Jesus are *one* in the cross, overcoming death, verse 25.

Jesus willingly laid down his life for our sins, and arose publicly for us. But it is the Father who gave and delivered Him and the Father who raised Him.

Recall the words of Isaiah 53 – “it pleased the Lord to put Him to grief!”

Fifth, see that the work of the cross and the resurrection are *inseparable*, vs. 25.

Even though full payment of sin was made on the cross, to which nothing can be added; that payment guarantees the new life of all whose sins have been paid by Jesus.

If Christ did not die, we are yet in our sins; and, if Christ did not rise, we are yet in our sins!

Sixth, likewise, the condemnation *of* sin and justification *from* sin are *united*. Here is the Just One judged for the unjust; and here are the unjust ones, us, who are pronounced just, righteous. Jesus is the righteousness of those justified by faith.

Seventh, every believer is *one* with Christ in His in his death for our sins, and in his resurrection for our justification.

Whatever else you get out of today’s message – and I hope it is much more! – do not miss the unity and oneness of our faith! There is one God, one Savior, one salvation, one faith, one church then, and one hope, and one baptism. This body cannot be divided, because God and His grace are not divided!

Whether we are wealthy or poor, male or female, from the East or from the West, educated or not

- what counts is Jesus;
- what counts is saving faith in His cross;
- what counts is being made one in His glorious, resurrection life, that is eternal!

We will say little on the first two points, since we have spent so much time on the Abrahamic promise and justification by faith alone.

We only add that this is at the core of your Bibles.

This is why the Bible is a Christian book.

This is why, as we walk through its pages, we greet patriarch after patriarch, leader after leader, king after king, and prophet after prophet, and count them as ours in the faith.

The Old Testament is not a Jewish only book.

There we find co-believers with us, our brothers and sisters, our fathers and mothers.

The last verse in Hebrews 11, the great Hall of Faith, says that apart from us, those in the OT are incomplete! We are a part with them, and they are a part with us!

Those not raised in the church find this especially welcoming and delightful, to be plugged into a body, a heritage, a family, and a kingdom! Abraham is our father; we all sit down with him and Isaac and Jacob, as well as Peter, John and Paul.

And why? Because of union with God through Christ.

Faith in Jesus brings us into the living room of the living God of grace.

Now let us take the **3rd and 4th unions** together: united to God the Father who delivered and raised Jesus, and the union between the Father and the Son in saving people from their sins.

It is a little unusual for Paul to speak of faith in the Father rather than in Christ. His usual way is to speak of faith in Christ, as in Romans 3:22: “the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.”

Here is the Father not sparing His Son, the theme of Romans 5:8.

Here is God the Father who stands as the Judge over the world, over all the sins of mankind.

And here is the Father, the One who justifies by His Son.

It is a terrible view that somehow the Father is not so loving as the Son, or has a different outlook in saving sinners than Christ Jesus.

He gave His Son out of love!

With an eye to your salvation, He looked away from Christ as all your sins were laid on Him.

And He raised up His beloved Son from the tomb, to demonstrate that death and sin cannot hold you!

He rejoices to see his sons and daughters returning from the land of sin, and runs out to greet you, demonstrating His power and love to you – How? By raising Christ from the dead!

Whatever lowliness, humility and weakness found in the Son stooping to identify with His sinful people, all of it has more than the Father's approval.

The Father is not standing by approving; the Father is giving Him, delivering Him, and raising Him up, out of love for you.

So see that the Father and the Son are one in the accomplishment of salvation, as well as in the application of salvation. You receive the Father and the Son when you received the gift of salvation in the cross.

We come to the **5th point** to see how the cross and the empty tomb are joined together, and are inseparable, in verse 25. Good Friday and Easter cannot be divided.

The two are quite different in themselves. The one is a death, the other is a life; one in lowest humiliation, one in highest exaltation.

But they are linked, the one leading to the other. And they have to be, for at least two biblical reasons.

First, because of who this is, Jesus, whom Peter calls the Prince of life – Acts 3:15. It was impossible that death could hold Him. So eternal and immortal is He, that He had to give Himself to death in order to die. It was more unnatural for him to die than to rise again, since in His human nature, He had no sin. Sin is what brings. Since Jesus is sinless, He must live again after giving Himself in death.

Second, Jesus must rise up to show how perfectly He paid for sin. The wages of sin is death, says Rom. 6:32. That is the paycheck. If you or I must pay for our sins, we will never fully pay up; we will never bring perfect satisfaction to the perfect justice and offended honor of an eternally righteous God. We would never get out of hell, never come to the point of paying in full.

But that is precisely what Jesus did for our sins. And having paid in full, He must rise from beneath that stroke, to demonstrate the full success of His atoning work on the cross.

Not only Jesus but the Father, by this resurrection, says, “See – He has accomplished redemption! He has done it and my justice is satisfied. All go free who come to Him!”

There are two vindications here. The cross is the vindication of God’s righteousness; and the resurrection is the vindication of God’s servant, Jesus.

But this greatly involves you, and brings us to the last two points, numbers 6 and 7.

First, the condemnation *of* sin and justification *from* sin are linked + second, every believer's transgressions are paid and every atoned believer is justified.

If all transgressions have been paid in full by Jesus, then all must be justified.

But the Bible does not say that all sins of all men have been paid for, but only the sins of those who believe.

Jesus did not die generically for sin. He really atoned for His people and their sins. We deserved hell, and because Jesus paid it all for us, it would be unjust for God to punish us twice.

This passage does not say that He was delivered over because of transgressions; but for OUR transgressions. This passage does not say that He was raised because of justification, but for OUR justification.

"I lay my life down for My Sheep," said Jesus. "You shall call His name, Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Matthew 1:21.

Do you remember Luther's famous observation? He said that biblical Christianity is all about personal pronouns. He is MY God, MY Savior, by faith in Him.

The man or woman in hell cannot say that Jesus paid their sins! If He did, why are they suffering there forever? How can God judge their sins again, if Jesus paid their full debt already?

Someone will answer that they didn't believe. That is true. But unbelief is a sin; did Jesus die for all sins or not? Nobody says that Jesus died for most sins of all people!

No, He died for all of the sins of those whom the Father gave to Him; the elect from before the foundation of the world.

And only in that sense can we say that grace is greater than sin.

Many Christians only believe that Jesus died only to make salvation possible. That is true, but not all the truth. And to present a half-truth as the whole truth is an untruth!

Think of it this way. Did Adam's fall make it only possible for men to be sinners? No. Well, in this Last Adam, Christ truly paid for the sins of His people. There was a real exchange on the cross. And His death makes those He died for into saints who are going to heaven!

And it is this that is received and applied by faith.

We do not offer to those lost in their sins a big, fat heavenly **MAYBE!**

Here is the Rock of your salvation. Not only that Jesus **CAN** save you, but that Jesus **WILL** save you, if you come to Him!

All for whom Christ died will come to Him. All who come to Him have their sins forgiven. All who come to the cross, die in Christ. And all who die in Christ, are raised with Christ! And no others!

This is our faith – the heart of it. It is according to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. You have a revealed faith by the God of light and truth, the God who has spoken. God has published His own redemption, His own justification, in His Son.

Second, this purpose revealed is wrought by the whole Trinity – the Father Authors, the Son Accomplishes, and the Spirit Applies. They are one in their purpose, gracious in their intent, and sovereign in all they do. The Son is emphasized as the sent of the Father, and the Father says of the Son, “Behold Him!”, while the Spirit points to Jesus as well.

Lastly, faith alone in Christ alone truly and solely and absolutely addresses sin. There is no other way. There is no other name given under heaven by which we **MUST** be saved! God seeks out fallen

man; man does not seek God. ‘Adam, where are you?’ was a question of great mercy and grace. He is asking, “Why are you hiding in your sins, when I provide a great Salvation from your sins!”

There is a redeemer; let us come to Him, who will never turn us away if we come to Him for salvation, for forgiveness of our sins, and for life.

As we will see then – peace, peace with God; access to God in grace; and hope in God’s own glory – shine forth from this faith, as we come to Romans 5.