

PHANTOM FAITH

Romans 4:1-8

Over the next five weeks we will be in a sermon series called *Phantom* Faith. This series will have a very strong emphasis on evangelism and will be a great time to invite non-Christian friends to come, hear, and explore the gospel. During these same five weeks, we will be studying Romans 4 through 8 in the small group guides.

In the sermon this weekend Pastor J.D. talked to us about how we relate to God through faith. Specifically we learned about how Abraham's belief in God was "credited to him as righteousness." Paul has already established in the first three chapters of Romans that all of humanity, both religious and non-religious people, are sinful before God. The law of the Old Testament makes this guilt clear, but reconciliation with God has been made available outside of the law through the atoning sacrifice Jesus made on the cross. Paul's explanation of the faith of Abraham in this chapter is important because many of his readers, just like many people today, had bad ideas about how to please God.

The Main Point:

Salvation is received by grace through faith, and not by works.

Many of Paul's readers would have lived for years under the impression that they were pleasing God by simply completing the same actions as Abraham, or as Pastor J.D. put it this weekend "making a contract with God." The fact that Abraham received righteousness as a gift and not as the result of a contract is pivotal to our understanding the book of Romans, and to the entire rest of the Bible.

In Romans chapter 4 Paul is echoing one of the constant themes of Scripture: God has done great things and you should trust him! In the same way you and I can't impress God with our actions or out bargain him with contracts. We must simply be convinced that Jesus did exactly what the Scripture says he did.

Sermon Response Question:

1. Pastor J.D. encouraged us to a) stop negotiating, b) stop boasting, and c) to trust God. Why do we sometimes feel the need to boast (or brag)? How did we learn that grace excludes all boasting?

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Bible Study Questions: Read Romans 4:1-8

2. According to these verses, what is faith? What good is having faith?
3. Paul is looking back to the example of Abraham, the ancestor of all Jews. What did Abraham “discover” about being justified (v. 1-5)?
4. Paul also looks back to David, the greatest king of Israel. What did David discover about forgiveness (v. 6-8)?

Small Group Discussion Questions:

5. Pastor J.D. used three equations to describe poor understandings of faith. Salvation = works, salvation = faith + works, salvation = faith as a work. How is each of these equations incorrect? What is the correct formula for salvation?
6. How is saving faith different from what many churchgoers and non-churchgoers think faith is?
7. Break up into groups of 2-3. In what ways are you tempted to take credit for your own righteousness? How can you encourage one another to believe in God, who justifies the ungodly?

Prayer Guide

In your groups of 2-3, pray.

- Be thankful that God counts us as righteous because we believe in him. (v. 3)
- Pray for friends and family members who need to recognize that God does not save the one who works, but the one who believes in him who justifies the ungodly. (v. 5)

With your entire group, pray for the Syrian Refugee Crisis.

Pray for the salvation of the displaced refugees. Specifically that their needs would be met and that their hearts would be turned to the only true hope of the gospel.

- Pray for members of the Summit who are faithfully serving in various places who are working specifically with Syrian refugees.

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