

Written for Us

During a Pre-Trib Conference a couple of years ago, one of the speakers said that the Bible, the Old Testament in particular, was written to Israel but it is written for us. So, when we read the Bible, keep in mind it was written for YOU. We are not innocent bystanders. No. WE are the target of the Bible messages. We, whoever we are, are the readers and hence the audience that the various authors of Scripture are targeting. It is written for OUR benefit! Paul will say essentially that in today's lesson.

We start with an overlap from last week.

Romans 4:16 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,

How do I know that faith is non-meritorious? Because Paul says so. “..it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace...” And grace is “unmerited favor.” Last week illustrations of grace were presented.

Romans 4:17 (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.

Written for Us
Romans 4:16-25

Something to note here. Paul, in chapter 4, is constantly referring back to the Genesis account of Abraham. Paul is making the argument that Abraham is the paradigm, the example, the template of faith in the Messiah. Remember, Messiah is from the Hebrew word for “Messiah” or the “Anointed One” which is translated to “Christ” in the New Testament. The Second Person of the Trinity will take on flesh (John 1:14) and lived among us. But in the Old Testament, prior to taking on flesh, He appears in different guises as “Angel of the Lord,” “Word of the Lord,” and “Lord/Yahweh” and other names.

In Romans chapter 4, Paul is constantly referring back to Genesis concerning Abraham.

In Romans 4:3 he quotes from Genesis 15:6.

In Romans 4:17 he quotes from Genesis 17:5

In Romans 4:18 he quotes from Genesis 15:5

In Romans 4:22 he echoes Genesis 15:6

Salvation based upon faith is not something new in the Church Age. The gospel including the imputation of righteousness based on faith is a concept that God illuminated from the beginning. Abel’s sacrifice was accepted by God. I still have to go back to Hebrews chapter 11 to verify that even Abel was listed there:

Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

Written for Us
Romans 4:16-25

In Genesis chapter 4, there is no mention of “righteousness.” Yet the writer of Hebrews was able to say “he (Abel) obtained the testimony (witness) that he was righteous...” How did the writer of Hebrews know? Obviously, there are facts that writers of the New Testament knew, perhaps from oral tradition that were never written down, until they were written down in the New Testament.

Please note that I am not digging deep into some of the verses. I will when we get to Romans 4:20.

Romans 4:18 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.”

Romans 4:19 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;

Remember the list of kinds of death¹:

1. Spiritual Death
2. Physical Death: Matt. 8:22; 2 Cor. 5:1–8; Romans 8:38, 39; Phil. 1:21.
3. Sexual Death: Romans 4:16–21; Heb. 11:11, 12.
4. Production Death: James 2:16
5. Carnal Death: Romans 8:6, 13; Eph. 5:14; 1 Timothy 5:6; James 1:15; Revelation 3:1; Luke 15:24, 32.

¹ <https://deanbible.org/dbmfiles/slides/2011-Colossians-053b.pdf>

Written for Us
Romans 4:16-25

6. Positional Death: Romans 6
7. Second Death Rev 2:11; 20:14; 20:6; 21:18

OK, here is where I want to concentrate for this lesson...

Romans 4:20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver (aorist passive indicative) in unbelief but grew strong in faith (aorist passive indicative), giving glory (aorist active participle) to God,

Romans 4:21 and being fully assured (aorist passive participle) that what God had promised (perfect middle indicative), He was able also to perform (aorist active infinitive).

The verb parsings are included in verses 4:20-21 because there is an interplay among the verbs that is salient to our discussion. Most of what is presented here is based upon Herman's lesson 151 on these verses.

He (Abraham) did not waiver (aorist passive indicative)

Grew strong in faith (aorist passive indicative)

Giving glory to God (aorist active participle)

Being fully assured (aorist passive participle)

God had promised (perfect middle indicative)

He was able to perform (aorist infinitive)

Written for Us
Romans 4:16-25

Did not waiver in unbelief. My understanding is that “waiver” has to do with the strength of his will to use faith not any amount of strength of faith. His faith did not fluctuate. It was his will to use faith that could have fluctuated, but it didn’t.

Grew strong in faith. The word for grew strong is a verb from our friend “dunamis” or power. Translating this as grew strong in faith makes it sound like faith becomes stronger. Faith doesn’t get stronger but our will to use it gets stronger as the previous verb for not to waiver indicates. It is passive although translated as an active voice. It is often translated as “strengthen” but it can be translated as “endued with strength” in faith. Our faith is empowered by our will. The question then becomes, in any given situation do I trust God to do what He promised?

There is a need here to say a few words about faith. I am familiar with R. B. Thieme’s description of increasing in faith. He said something to the effect that faith is like a string which when it grows strong becomes like a rope. But faith, is faith. This is a place that some differ from Thieme.

From our perspective, faith doesn’t get better or bigger or stronger. In our experience, we are more at ease using faith in more difficult situations the more we use faith.

Take driving a car. I started driving rather late in life, sometime around 30. I remember having to think about each step when I was driving. When to put on the accelerator. When to put on the brake. How to gently apply the brake to prevent the car from sudden stops. As time went on it became easier to maneuver the car without a great deal of thought. I became a “stronger” driver. The car went forward with the same force, but I was now better able to control the power.

Written for Us
Romans 4:16-25

Take learning Bible information. Grow in the knowledge... Learning about God, about Jesus Christ and the Christian life is important and there are many words to show our increase in knowledge. For instance, there is *gnosis*, then *epignosis* and words for understanding and wisdom. But when we come to the word for faith...there is just faith.

Here are some useful quotes from Hal Lindsey's book "Combat Faith."

"Faith works because God is faithful and able to keep His promises. The more we learn about God, the more we become certain of the things for which we hope. It is our knowledge and confidence in the object of faith that grows, not faith itself.²"

"Another important part of the Bible's definition is that in and of itself, faith has no effective power to accomplish God's work. The power in true faith comes from its object. Biblical faith must have an object, and that object is God Himself.³"

"Everything about the biblical definition of faith stresses that it is not something in us that makes it work, but rather the character of God that makes it work. This prevents faith itself from becoming a human work and gives all the glory of our faith exploits to God.⁴"

He was able to perform (aorist infinitive)

First, the infinitive shows purpose. God's purpose is to perform what He promised. Remember one of my favorite verses

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

2 Lindsey, H. (1986). *Combat Faith*. Toronto ; New York: Bantam Books. Page 22

3 Lindsey, H. (1986). *Combat Faith*. Toronto ; New York: Bantam Books. Page 24

4 Lindsey, H. (1986). *Combat Faith*. Toronto ; New York: Bantam Books. Page 24

Hebrews 4:2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

God promises, then we take that promise and apply our faith. God performs. It is imputed to us as righteousness. That is the purpose of God.

But notice the aorist participles. As Herman has told us repeatedly, the action of the aorist participle comes before the action of the main verb.

So, we give glory to God and are assured God can do what He promised before we are strengthened in faith.

Let us break this down into individual components. Since giving glory happens before the rest of the sentence, what does that mean? How do we give glory to God?

We know from Isaiah 64:6 that any human efforts on our part not empowered by the Holy Spirit are an affront to God. Only actions we do that are empowered by the Holy Spirit are acceptable to God. Why? Because only God is perfectly righteous. The conclusion is that we give glory to God by trusting Him to work through us, by our faith dependence on Him. Paul goes back to Abraham's faith:

Genesis 15:6 Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

The application of the conclusion is that walking by faith is giving glory to God. We can give glory to God through prayer, by attending church and learning about God, by singing spiritual hymns and by simply walking by faith.

Ephesians 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

Ephesians 5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

Ephesians 5:20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

Ephesians 5:21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

A side note concerning God's glory. One of the basic premises of Dispensational Theology is that the purpose of human history is to glorify God. The third "sine qua non" or requirements of Dispensationalism is explained briefly by Charles Ryrie:

"A third aspect of the *sine qua non* of dispensationalism is a rather technical matter that will be discussed more fully later (see chapter 5). It concerns the underlying purpose of God in the world. The covenant theologian, in practice, believes this purpose to be the salvation (although covenant theologians strongly emphasize the glory of God in their theology), and the dispensationalist says the purpose is broader than that; namely, *the glory of God*.⁵"

5 Ryrie, C.C. (2007). *Dispensationalism*. Chicago: Moody Publishers. Page 48

Written for Us
Romans 4:16-25

In chapter 5 of his book Charles Ryrie again states:

“No dispensationalist minimizes the importance of God’s saving purpose in the world. But whether it is God’s total purposes, or even His principal purpose, is open to question. The dispensationalist sees a broader purpose in God’s program for the world than salvation, and that purpose is His own glory. For the dispensationalist the glory of God is the governing principle and overall purpose, and the soteriological program is one of the principal means employed in bringing to pass the greatest demonstration of His own glory.⁶”

I can see from having dipped into the subject of glory that a further study of it is required. Let me put that on my “to do” list.

Romans 4:22 Therefore it was also credited to him as righteousness.

Romans 4:23 Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him,

Romans 4:24 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,

The Bible is written for the Christian today. Dr. Moo says, “The conviction expressed in vv. 23-24 that what is written in Genesis about Abraham has relevance to the Christian believer has been the implicit assumption of the whole of chap. 4.”

Also, “Paul’s conviction that the OT everywhere speaks to Christians is fundamental to his theology and preaching.⁷”

⁶ Ryrie, C.C. (2007). *Dispensationalism*. Chicago: Moody Publishers. Page 106

⁷ Moo, D.J. (1996). *The Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. Page 287

**Written for Us
Romans 4:16-25**

This view must of course be tempered by what the rest of the New Testament including Paul says about the applicability of the Law, including circumcision.

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