



MADE RIGHT THROUGH FAITH ROMANS 4:1-15

Opening Illustration – Competitiveness

- Competitiveness can distort our understanding of grace—leading us to think God’s love is earned by outperforming others.

Context in Romans

- Gentiles:
 - More numerous and held more influence in Rome.
 - Looked down on Jewish believers for clinging to traditions like Sabbath, kosher laws, and circumcision.
- Jews:
 - Steeped in long-standing traditions and law.
 - Struggled to accept Gentiles who didn’t follow these practices.
- Paul insists God is forming **one new family**, not based on law or heritage but on **faith in Jesus**.

Paul’s Point So Far

- No one—Jew or Gentile—meets God’s perfect standard.
- Romans 3:23–24: All have sinned and fall short; righteousness comes only through God’s grace.
- Illustration: being “fast” doesn’t matter if God’s standard is not running but **flying**—no one can meet it.

Romans 4: Abraham as the Example

- Abraham is the “father” of the Jewish people and the model of righteousness.

- Question: How was Abraham made right with God?
- Genesis 15:6 — Abraham **believed**, and God counted him righteous.
- This happened **before**:
 - Circumcision.
 - The giving of the Law.
- Therefore:
 - Righteousness isn’t earned by obedience, rituals, or performance.
 - Abraham is the spiritual father of **all who believe**, whether circumcised or not.

Gift vs. Wages

- Paul explains that wages are earned, but righteousness is a **gift**.
- David (Psalm 32) celebrates the joy of forgiveness that isn’t earned by works.

Application — Two Groups Today

- Those who feel “not good enough”
 - Grew up hearing messages of failure or inadequacy.
 - Church may have emphasized morality over grace.
 - Need to know: God’s acceptance isn’t based on performance; grace meets you where you are.
- Those who see themselves as “the good ones”
 - High-achievers who assume God prefers them.
 - But when the standard is “flying,” human righteousness is “filthy rags.”
 - Faith—not moral achievement—makes us right with God.

Conclusion

- God’s grace is wider and better than we assume.
- Salvation is not for the strong but for those who call on Jesus in faith.
- Romans 10:10–13 — Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
- Jesus meets us on the cross, takes our place, and gives us righteousness as a gift.

Connect Group Discussion

Warm up:

1. Who in the room is competitive, and who is not very competitive? Have a competition to see who is the most competitive :)
2. What stood out to you from Sunday's sermon?

Study & Discussion:

1. In what subtle ways do “competitive” mindsets show up in our spiritual lives, even when we believe salvation is by grace (e.g., comparing ourselves to others, measuring spiritual worth by activity, judging how others “perform” in faith)
2. Paul uses Abraham to show that righteousness comes before obedience. How does this challenge our assumptions about what God wants from us first—faith or behaviour? What does it look like practically to put *faith before performance* in daily life?
3. If righteousness is a gift, not a wage, how do we cultivate gratitude rather than entitlement in our relationship with God? What practices help us remember that we stand before God by grace alone?
4. Think about the analogy of God's standard being “flying.” What helps you rest in grace when you're tempted to believe you must “run faster” to earn God's favour? Where in your life are you still trying to “earn,” and what might trusting grace look like instead?

Practice of the Week: “Receive, Don't Achieve” Prayer

Once a day this week take **5 minutes** to pray with open hands. “Righteousness is received, not achieved.”

1. Open Your Hands
 - A physical reminder that we come to God empty-handed.
2. Slowly Pray:
 - “Lord, I receive what only You can give. I cannot earn Your love. I cannot achieve righteousness. I receive Your grace today.”
3. Name the Area You've Been Competing or Performing In
 - Trying to be the “good Christian.”
 - Comparing yourself to others.
 - Feeling inadequate or guilty.
 - Trying to earn God's approval.
4. Release It to Jesus
 - Ask: “Jesus, help me trust Your gift instead of my effort.”
5. End with Thanksgiving
 - Thank God for one specific thing He has given you that you did not earn.