

How to Give Glory to God

Romans 4:16-25

“He [Abraham] staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;” (Romans 4:20)

Is God just? Does He act rightly? As the Creator of the universe, does He execute His will in a moral and righteous manner? Does He render exactly what is deserved?

If God acts righteously, as the Judge of all, then where does that leave sinners? If God, according to His holy nature, cannot overlook rebellious evil, then what about your rebellious evil and my rebellious evil?

Many who hear this will eagerly jump to the fact that God is forgiving. But wait a moment. How does God, who is infinitely just, forgive? How can He render exactly what is deserved, and yet not render exactly what is deserved? How can He be both just and forgiving? Do you see what is at stake here? The glory of the God of truth is at stake, and so is your eternal destiny. How can God be just and still justify not sending evil people to the lake of fire?

Various world religions approach this problem in different ways. Some say that God is not just. Others say that He does not grant forgiveness – you have to keep working at it. Still other religions deny the reality of evil; to many, it is imaginary or a state of mind.

If you illustrate this as a triangle with three sides: justice, forgiveness, and the reality of evil, you can visualize the problem. Viewed from one corner, God appears to be just and forgiving; but what does that mean about evil? If He is forgiving and evil is real, then how is He just? Or if God is just and evil is real, how is He forgiving?

This puzzle helps us to proclaim the unique excellence of our God. Romans 4 declares, illustrates and applies the unique, Biblical answer to this puzzle. Chapters 1-5 of the Book of Romans reads like a legal brief. As the prosecuting attorney, Paul indicts all of humanity (1:18-3:23); all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (3:23); all Jewish and Gentile people are unrighteous (Romans 3:9-10). He established the reality of evil – our evil. Nobody could work hard enough or long enough to overcome this problem (3:20). But at this critical juncture of “Our Story” and “God’s Glory,” God showed us His righteousness (3:21-23). At this intersection – this very crossroad – of “My greatest needs” and “God’s glorious deeds,” He showed us His unique excellence. To the glory of God, we proclaim the answer in Romans 3:26: **“To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”** Our text helps us to glorify the unique

mercies of our God, who is both just and the justifier of repentant sinners. We glorify God with faith that fully trusts His promises.

I. The Principle of Saving Faith: By Grace through Faith, Giving the Glory to God, 16

To magnify the unique excellence of our God, the Lord has provided salvation as a free gift of grace through faith in Him. 16

¹⁶ Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Romans 3:26 told us that God is just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Romans 4:16 helps to explain how all of this is to the glory of God (as we shall see in Romans 4:20). Romans 3:9-10 had condemned all people – both Jew and Gentile. But verse 16 shows that God’s gracious promise was made to both groups. God did so in order that His promises would give His people confident certainty. We glorify God with faith that fully trusts His promises.

- Not only to the Jewish believers, who had been under the Law
- But to all those of us who place faith in Him, as Abraham did

To the glory of God, our salvation is by faith in God’s gracious promises alone. Beginning in the end of verse 16 and going through verse 23, we find a helpful illustration of this principle: the faith of Abraham. You know that at least three world religions point to Abraham as their father. These next verses explain why the Biblical Gospel of Christianity alone magnifies God’s unique excellence.

II. The Illustration of Saving Faith: Abraham, Giving Glory to God, 16-23

How Abraham Glorified God, 16-21

Abraham is “a father to us all” in this sense: he exercised such dependent faith that he glorified God; everyone who wants to go to heaven must follow his example. Abraham uniquely magnified God’s matchless ways by confidently trusting God’s promises.

¹⁶ Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

¹⁷ (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. ¹⁸ Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. ¹⁹ And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara’s womb: ²⁰ He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; ²¹ And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

According to Genesis 17:4, God promised childless Abraham that he would be a father of many nations. According to verse 19, the Lord gave him this promise when he was nearly one hundred years old! And Sarah was long past child-bearing age. How did he respond to this promise? He glorified God! This text tells us how we can do the same. Let’s be sure we see this clearly. What would

you think if a childless couple in their 80's announced that they were planning to have a child naturally? Sounds dubious, right? But here are the keys by which Abraham magnified God's unique excellence:

❖ **Abraham believed God who quickens the dead, 17.**

Abraham believed in the God of the resurrection – the God who quickens the dead. Do you believe that God has the power to resurrect your body, after you die?

❖ **Abraham believed God who calls things into existence did not exist. 17**

To those who would say, "This is all nonsense!" Paul explained: God calls into existence things that do not exist. "The ability of God to quicken the dead is seen in its clearest light in the resurrection of Jesus (note vv. 24–25). God also is portrayed as the one who calls into existence things that are not. The immediate reference could be to the calling into existence of the child Isaac yet unborn at that time. The neuter plural participles, however, suggest a broader context. The point is not that God speaks of things that do not exist as though they did but that he speaks the nonexistent into existence (Heb 11:3; 2 Pet 3:5)."ⁱ Our modern American idiom is "think outside the box." God works outside the box of what "everybody knows." He does so in order that we might see His glory, and praise Him. We glorify God with faith that fully trusts His promises.

❖ **Even when it seemed impossible, Abraham believed God's promise to him. 18**

❖ **Since Abraham was not weak in faith:**

- He trusted God's promises as being more substantial than "the facts" (about his age) before his eyes. 19
- He gave glory to God, because he did not waver in his trust in God's promises. 20
- He was fully persuaded that what God had promised, God was able to perform. 21

One author wrote, "Faith is total surrender to the ability and willingness of God to carry out his promises."ⁱⁱ

What Abraham Received *Because* He Glorified God, 22-23

²² And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. ²³ Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

Abraham received far more than a son named Isaac. Genesis 15:5-6 records the great reward for his faith: "**And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.**" When Abraham responded by placing his faith on God's promise, God placed His righteousness on Abraham's personal account. To exalt the unique glory of the one and only true God, this is how He saves people. God, the Judge of all, declares the repentant sinners who trust His promise to be righteous in their standing before Him. We glorify God with faith that fully trusts His promises. We have looked at the principle of saving faith, and the illustration of Abraham. Now consider:

III. The Application of Saving Faith in Each Believer, Giving Glory to God, 24-25

²⁴ But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; ²⁵ Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Thank God for the first for words of verse 24, **“But for us also . . . !”** Verse 23 had concluded that Genesis 15:6 was not written for Abraham alone. **“But for us also!”**

But wait. Abraham believed God’s promise that God would give him descendants. Is that what we are supposed to believe? No, the content that we must believe is found in verses 24-25.

Old Abraham knew that his body was, for all practical purposes, dead (4:19). But he believed God. Do you know that you were born **“dead in your sins”** (Colossians 2:13)? **“Dead in trespasses and sins”** is the truthful description of every sinner, according to Ephesians 2:1. Abraham could have thought, **“I’m nearly one hundred! Nothing will ever change for me now. My body is virtually dead, and common sense tells me not to wish for anything different.”** You could be thinking: **“I’ve tried to do right, but it’s like I’m dead to doing right, and very much alive to doing wrong. Nothing will ever change.”**

The phrase, **“but for us also”** tells us that there is hope. There was hope for Abraham, and there is hope for us. Abraham placed his faith on God’s promise for a son; God declared him to be righteous! You can place your confidence on God’s promise for salvation; God will declare you to be righteous!

²⁴ But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; ²⁵ Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Look at these remarkable benefits for giving glory to God by trusting God’s Gospel promises:

- ❖ **If you believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead**
 - Because Jesus was delivered for your offenses
 - Because Jesus was raised again for your justification
- ❖ **God will place Christ’s righteousness on your personal record with Him. 24**

What’s the point? We glorify God with faith that fully trusts His promises. To the glory of God, this is how He solved that puzzle – and it means all eternity to us.

Romans 3:26: **“To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”**

Though your evil is very real, this is how the just God can forgive you and declare you to be righteous in His sight.

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ⁱ Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 128.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.* p. 131.