



Life Group Study Notes

"The Proclamation: You're Counted"

Sr. Ps. James Lowe - December 11, 2016

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- Have you recently let yourself down? What happened?
- Who is one of the best people you can turn to for help in time of trouble?
- Have you recently helped someone out of some trouble? What happened?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

Genesis 12:1-3 ESV *Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

- God's disposition and intention has always been to bless humanity. This is taught in the creation story in Genesis 1, and is reiterated again here. God's desire and plan was to bless all the families of the earth through Abram. This would happen through Jesus, who is Abram's descendant.

Galatians 3:23-29 ESV *Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

- Although God gave the Law to Israel, it was never intended to be the means by which sinful humanity could enter into a relationship with the holy Creator. Instead, it was intended in part to help Israel learn that they could not earn their own right standing with God. They would need God's help to deal with their sin. Jesus is that help. He died for our sins, so that we could be forgiven and enter into an intimate relationship with God. We receive these blessings by believing, accepting, and embracing God's witness concerning Jesus.

Romans 4:1-8 ESV *What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are*

those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.

- God forgives us not because we try hard to obey him (for we all fail and come up short), but because we believe in what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

Romans 4:9-12 ESV *Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.*

- Abraham clearly was accepted as righteous in his relationship with God even though he was not a sinless person. His acceptance was not based on his own efforts, but on his faith in God.

Romans 4:13-17 ESV *For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.*

- Believing what God has said and done is what pleased God and moved him to fulfill his promises to Abraham. He likewise fulfills his promises to us through Jesus because we believe him.

Romans 4:18-25 ESV *In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*

- We too must persevere in our faith, which is precious in God's sight. All of our trust needs to be in God and what he's said and done in Christ.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related point for discussion.

- What are the dangers of trusting in our own good behavior for acceptance by God?
- Why would God require us to believe him in order to be regarded by him as righteous?
- How can we grow in believing what God has said and done for us in Jesus?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Ask God to reveal any self-reliance in us that undermines our trust in Jesus.
- Ask God to lead us into greater faith and understanding about our righteousness in Jesus.
- Ask God to give us opportunities to help a weak believer grow in faith in Jesus.