Faith Faces the Facts

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

“Just the facts ma’am. Just give me the facts.” Some of you may remember that line from the television series Dragnet. I always thought it was a great line. I thought it was even greater when I started saying it to myself during counseling sessions as I listened to people in their distress. Much of what is said is oversimplification, conjecture and overstatement. “Just the facts, please, just give me the facts” I often lament inside. Emotions can run high in crisis situations. But nothing can really be done about it until the plain facts are laid out clearly.

That’s also true in the matter of our salvation, how we are saved from sin and damnation. People can get emotional about this. They have their ideas or beliefs in the matter. Too often, though, they are not willing to just face the facts of the matter as the Bible presents them. Today we will consider the simple facts of our salvation because that’s what faith does. As Abraham faced the facts, believed what God said and was credited with righteousness, so it is with us—Faith Faces the Facts.

I

Our text presents us with three facts we must accept in faith about our salvation. The first one is the fact of our hopelessness in saving ourselves. The illustration Paul uses to bring out this truth is quite interesting. It is the situation of Abraham and Sarah facing the facts of their old age and Sarah’s life-long inability to have children.

Neither of those things could be denied. Abraham was 99 years old, an old man. Humanly speaking he knew his chances of fathering children were, for all practical purposes, none. He considered his body as good as dead. Sarah’s body, too, was well past what all humans know to be the age of child-bearing. If she hadn’t conceived during the years women normally do, well, she wasn’t going to when she was well past that age. It was “against all hope,” our text says.

Still, Abraham believed the Lord’s promise that he would be the father of many nations. God credited that faith, that facing of the facts of his own hopelessness, to him as righteousness. What that means is simply that God was not holding any of Abraham’s sins against him. He forgave them. Abraham was saved from eternal damnation.
This truth applies to us and our salvation this way: We need to acknowledge that on our own we are as good as dead in our trespasses and sin. We are well beyond the point when we could possibly do enough good works to earn eternal life. Scripture lays the facts before us: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” Romans 3:23. “All our righteous acts are as filthy rags” (Is 66:4). “There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins” (Eccl 7:20). Scripture also lays out this fact: “No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him—the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough” (Ps 49:7,8).

Let’s face it, we’re hopeless to save ourselves from sin and damnation. Faith faces that fact.

II

If that were the only fact for faith to face that would be horrible. But God has given us two other facts to face in faith. One is the fact of God’s gracious power. Here again Paul presents this fact to us through Abraham’s situation.

God had promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky, that they would possess the land of Canaan, that Abraham would be the father of many nations, that through his seed (one descendant) all nations on earth would be blessed. It was a fact that God had made all of those promises. It was also a fact that at the age of 99 Abraham had yet to see one of them kept.

But it was also fact that God had always been so good to Abraham. Even when Abraham faced what seemed like insurmountable problems, God had blessed and helped him. It always worked out for his good.

The promises God had made him were strong and powerful. That’s what God’s Word is—strong and powerful. It works on the heart. Thus we are told that Abraham “did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God has the power to do what he has promised.”

God is either the biggest liar of all or he is the one, the only one, who keeps all his promises. Abraham faced the fact that he and Sarah could do nothing to have children. He faced the fact that God, who had created all things in six days, the God who had so eagerly and powerfully sustained him and Sarah and brought them so much good throughout life, well, that God certainly could and would keep his promises to them. He believed God, and God credited to him as righteousness. In God’s eyes Abraham had no sin. He was saved.

This truth applies to us and our salvation this way: God has promised that “whoever believes in him will not perish but will have eternal life” (JN 3:16); “Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for all our sins” (I JN 2:2); “There is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (RM 8:1). Those are gracious words, words of love that we do not deserve. They are powerful words from the all-powerful God. They move us, as they moved Abraham, to “not waver through unbelief regarding the promises of God.” Like Abraham, we are fully persuaded “that God has the power to do what he has promised.”

Let’s face it, our gracious God has the power to keep his promises to us and he will. Faith faces that fact.

III

Finally it faces the fact of God’s faithfulness. Here again we see the fact of God’s faithfulness in Abraham’s situation. Abraham believed God, and God “credited it to him as righteousness.” That’s how Abraham was saved—through faith, trusting God’s promises, not through his own good works.
That’s the way we are saved from sin, too. Notice the point Paul makes in our text: “The words, ‘it was credited to him’ were written not for (Abraham) alone, but also for us.” God doesn’t treat you and me any differently than he did Abraham. Abraham’s trust in God was not misplaced. Neither is ours.

God had promised and sent “the Seed of the woman” who “crush(ed) the serpent’s head.” God has blessed all nations on earth with a Savior from sin in one particular descendant of Abraham, Jesus Christ. Concerning that Savior God promised that he would “lay on him the iniquity of us all.” He did that when Jesus suffered and died on the cross. God promised the Savior would again “see the light of life.” Thus Jesus rose from the dead three days after his death. That resurrection is God’s “paid in full” stamp of approval on Jesus’ suffering and death as the payment for our sins, the assurance of our forgiveness. God can’t and won’t go back on any of those promises.

Let’s face the fact that God is faithful. No matter what anyone else says, no matter what the circumstances seem to say, you can trust God to keep his promise to take you home to heaven. You can trust all his other promises to you, too. Faith faces that fact.

Your Old Adam, your sinful nature doesn’t want you to face those facts. Neither does Satan. Neither does the world. They will proposition you every day to view those “facts” of your hopelessness to save yourself, and God’s gracious power and faithfulness are nothing but fiction and foolishness. They will appeal to your emotions and to what others have to say.

But you, you tell them “Just the facts, please. I am hopeless to save myself. In his gracious power God has promised to save me and he is faithful.” It is thus that FAITH FACES THE FACTS. Amen.