

Title: Abraham's Faith
Scripture: Romans 4:17-25
Series: God's Saving Grace

1. Introduction:

- a. Earlier in chapter 4, Paul argued that justification comes by faith alone. He focused on the patriarch Abraham as an example of this truth. **Genesis 15:6** And he (Abraham) believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.
- b. Accordingly, Abraham's righteousness by faith was established some fourteen years before he was circumcised. So Paul concludes that righteousness comes by faith apart from the works of the Law and that it is equally available to all, whether they be Jews or Gentiles.
- c. In today's passage, Paul explains the nature of true faith by describing what went on inside Abraham.
 - i. As we consider the example of Abraham, each of us will come to a better understanding of what it means that **the righteous shall live by faith.**

2. Verse 17: The Object of Abraham's Faith: 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.
- a. A simple reading of verse 17 demonstrates that the object of Abraham's faith was God.
 - b. It is fundamental that we understand that the object of one's faith is what is most important. One's faith,

outstanding as it may be, will never benefit its owner if it has the wrong object.

- i. In other words, you can sincerely and wholeheartedly believe in something and still be wrong because the object in which you have believed is worthless.
 1. In times past, some believed the frozen ice was thick enough to support their weight but did not live to tell about it. They actually died by faith. Their genuine faith was placed in the wrong object. This is very possible and even prevalent today.
 2. Many people have genuine faith in the wrong things.
- ii. Scripture concludes that Abraham's faith was not perfectly strong, but it was perfectly placed because the object of that faith was God.
- iii. We all have faith. The decisive issue is where that faith is placed.
 1. We also conclude that belief and intellectual assent, although necessary to saving faith, don't make up saving faith. The critical element of saving faith is *fiducia*, personal trust. We are justified by faith by trusting in Christ alone for our salvation.
 2. It is not just simply believing in God; everybody can believe in God. Satan believes in God. The demons believe in God and tremble (James 2:19). Saving faith is all about believing God, putting our trust in him for our life and death, and living by

trusting his promises even when we cannot see the fulfillment of those promises.

a. Gospel.

3. Our faith must be in the genuine God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

c. We learn from our verse that genuine faith in God caused Abraham to grasp two massive truths about God.

i. First, by faith, he understood that **God gives life to the dead**. Although there had been no recorded resurrection at this point in redemptive history, Abraham believed in God's resurrection power!

1. This is evident later in Abraham's life when God called him to sacrifice Isaac. Before he went up to the mountain, we read in **Genesis 22:5** Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."

ii. Second, by faith, Abraham believed in God as the creator who **calls into existence the things that do not exist**. Abraham believed in the God who creates *ex nihilo*, from nothing.

1. This truth would be the basis for Abraham's belief in the promise of God. God, to a certain extent, created Isaac *ex nihilo*.

d. Abraham's perception of God as the object of his faith was immense, and this incredible truth dominated his entire faith experience.

- i. If our view of God is as exalted as Abraham's, it will make an immense difference in our faith and approach to life.
 - e. So we have to ask. Do you see God as the creator *ex nihilo* and giver of life to the dead? Do you believe in the omnipotent God? In other words:
 - i. Is God the object of your faith?
 - ii. How do you perceive the object of our faith?
3. Verses 18-20A: The Obstacles to Abraham's Faith: 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." (19) 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. (20) No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God,
- a. Abraham's faith faced two obstacles.
 - i. The first was the biological impossibility of an heir due to Sarah's and his age.
 - ii. The second was the staggering nature of the promise made. That is, the promise was so wonderful it was hard to believe. It was too good to be true. To think that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars above and the dust below, that all the earth would be blessed through him, that he would achieve a standing he did not deserve, was overwhelming. This was difficult to believe.
 - b. But the bible tells us that **no unbelief made him waiver at the promise**. Though it was all incredible,

he did not waver. He believed in God amid the impossibility of what was being promised.

i. Beloved, you and I are to have this very same unwavering faith. Has God not made us promises too wonderful to believe, and yet we must believe them?

1. Will Christ come again? Will we be found dressed in the alien righteousness of Christ? Will we co-inherit with Jesus Christ? Such promises are too good to be true, except they are!

c. Some believe that when a person has faith, he inwardly agrees to ignore the facts. They see faith and facts as opposites. However, biblical faith is a composite of the two. Abraham did not make an unreasonable leap of faith. He knew the situation was impossible, but he also knew the power of the one true God. He weighed the human impossibility of becoming a father against the divine impossibility of God breaking His word. He decided that if God were God, nothing would be impossible for the God **who creates ex nihilo and resurrects the dead.**

d. Applying this to ourselves, if God is who he says he is, none of his promises will fail because he forgets us or our situation is beyond his power. The problem lies in us. We say we believe in this God, but we secretly doubt Him.

i. For all our lip service about trusting in God, we mostly rely upon ourselves.

- ii. I believe that some of us need to take deeper possession of the truths we have already believed about God.
 - 1. The length of our worry list reflects a good measure of how much spiritual truth we have appropriated.

4. Verse 20B-22: The Objective of Abraham's Faith: ...but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, (21) fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. (22) That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."

a. Our passage teaches us that Abraham's faith had two objectives:

i. The first objective of his faith **was to grow strong so that he could glorify God.**

1. We should emphasize that God is never glorified in a believer's life apart from faith--a reliance on God. Abraham's life **glorified God** as few lives have because he demonstrated a faith that few mortals have shown.

a. **Hebrews 11:6** And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

2. Some argue that verse 21 is one of the best definitions of faith in the bible as it describes Abraham as **fully convinced that God was able to do what he had**

promised. May we glorify God in the same way, taking him at his Word.

ii. The second objective of Abraham's faith was **righteousness.**

1. Beloved, faith that does not deny the existence of obstacles but evaluates them in the light of God's word and power (18-20) is true faith. Ultimately, it brings the full assurance that what God has promised, he will perform (21). That faith is reckoned for righteousness (22). Faith is the only way any of us will ever be righteous before God.

2. Our only hope in life and death is trusting Jesus Christ. There is nothing else to trust in.

b. Beloved, what is the objective of your faith? Do you live ever to glorify God and to be found righteous because you have wholly believed His promises?

5. Verse 23-25: The Children of Abraham's Faith: But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, (24) but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, (25) who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

a. The Bible tells us that the words **it was counted to him were not written for Abraham's sake alone but for ours also.** In other words, we can have righteousness, too. Promises as staggering as those made to Abraham are also ours. We are not only God's friends but his sons and daughters!

- i. Our present state will one day give way to an entirely new state, and what a blessed state that will be.
 - 1. **1 Corinthians 2:9** But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—
- b. Beloved, we are to believe as Abraham believed. “When we believe in Jesus as ‘put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification,’ we believe in the God ‘who gives life to the dead.’”
- c. However, we find another element of salvation that we must study: the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - i. We could understand how the apostle would say that Jesus was raised for his own vindication, to declare to the world that his conviction by an earthly court of accusers was criminal and that death could not hold him. That Jesus was raised for his own vindication is an essential element of the resurrection, but here, Paul says that **Christ was raised for our justification.**
- d. Beloved, what is the nature of debt that we owe God because of our sin? We have a moral debt against God. When a moral transgression has occurred, the offended person is not obligated to accept the payment of a substitute on behalf of the guilty. Christ laid down his life for his sheep on the cross. He offered himself in his perfect righteousness and took upon himself the sin of his people. If Jesus had stayed dead, we would have no justification, but when the Father

raised the Son from the dead, he told the world, I accept this payment for the debtors who can't pay.” The resurrection of Jesus is not simply for his vindication; it is for our justification because it is God’s demonstration to his unjust people that he accepts the payment in full for the moral debt we have incurred.

6. Benediction:

- a. **1 Corinthians 15:3-4** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, (4) that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

Public Reading of Scripture
1 Corinthians 15:1-4