

Romans 4:17-25 -Abraham's Faith – 10 July 2011

I like us this morning, to continue our journey through the beautiful book of Romans. So, if you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Romans 4 and we will look at verses 17-25 this morning. Romans 4 and the basis of our thinking will be verses 17-25 this morning.

The book of Romans is a tremendous book isn't it, because it is a book about the salvation of God. There is no greater need in man than that he must be saved, that he would come into that life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ and the book of Romans tells us God's salvation plan, how He is going to make sinful man right with Him, how this man could be reconciled to a holy God.

I share with you last week, a very important statement, because people aren't truly saved, until they are first truly aware they are lost. People aren't truly saved until they are first truly aware they are lost because the message of salvation is not about God making us feel good about ourselves. The message of salvation, is not about God bumping us up a few notches in the scale of human success. The message of salvation is not about God helping us hit home runs and straightening out our slice in golf. The message of salvation is about God saving us from our sins that would really damn us to hell. And Romans tells us how we are to be saved, that we are not saved by our birth, we are not saved by our works, we are not saved by rituals and liturgy but we are saved purely by the grace of God. How God made His Son, Jesus, to be sin for us who knew no sin.

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You know His Son, Jesus Christ, the eternal God, Son Of God Himself, He had never, ever committed sin. But the Bible says, God the Father, made Him the Son to be sin for us. In other words, God the Father, treated Jesus as if He had lived our lives and committed all the sins of those who would believe in Him and He was punished and He suffered for our sins and He was therefore made sin for us so that in exchange we might be made the righteousness of God in the Him. The beautiful doctrine of substitution is that Jesus suffered for our sakes that we may be saved because of what He has done.

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When God looks at us today, He sees Christ and when God looked at the cross, He sees us. Great doctrine of substitution and what we get is complete forgiveness

because of Jesus Christ. And you know we are saved today, the message of salvation is predicated on grace, is not what we have done, but all Jesus had done and God freely gives it to those who would believe in Him.

And so, that is the grace of God, that is the gift of God, that is the message of Romans, we are saved by grace alone and what man needs today is to believe in what Jesus had done.

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The Bible reminds us in Romans 16, it says

16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace;

We are saved by grace, not by our works and the way to access the grace of God is faith. Faith is the arm that reaches out to the grace, the gift of salvation and men and women today, all over the world are called to have faith in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ who died for our sins.

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I gave you an illustration last week, about the importance of distinguishing faith and grace. We are saved by grace, but it is faith that allows us to access that grace. Imagine a man, stuck in a HDB flat that is now on flames, in fire. He has no choice but to get out of the window in order to be saved and there is a group of firemen, with that canvas, waiting for the man and says, "Jump, we will save you, jump, we will save you." And the man hesitate, but seeing that he had no other choice, he says, "I would trust in these firemen who will hold me up" and so he leaps, he takes a leap of faith, he jumps off the ledge and he falls safely into that canvas sheet.

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Suppose you are that man, would you walk out of that canvas and say, I am so glad my faith saved me. You wouldn't, you would acknowledge that it is those firemen who saved you, but it is faith that enable you to be saved by those firemen.

My friends, you are saved by Jesus Christ and what he has done on the cross. But men and women are called to have faith in God, in Jesus Christ.

So, the question this morning is this, if I am called to this vital understanding of faith in Christ, what kind of a faith is this, isn't this important? If man is to be saved only

by the grace of God and the grace of God comes upon us only by your faith, then it is important for us to understand what this faith is? Certainly, it is important in Paul's mind and therefore in Romans 4:17-25, Paul is going to explain to us the kind of faith that saves us.

He says in verse 16

That this faith is of the faith of Abraham.

In other words, the kind of faith that saves you, is similar, is patterned, modeled after the faith of Abraham. So, this morning, we are going to look at Abraham's faith, not so that we would just have a theoretical knowledge about that man, some thousands of years ago, but we may see that the faith we need to have in Jesus, is the same kind of faith Abraham had in God.

So, let's look at verses 17-25. The Bible says :

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.

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;

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.

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The theme today is very simple, it is about Abraham's faith and that is the kind of faith that I hope all that is seated in this room will have in Jesus Christ. Let's ask God to teach us this morning about Abraham's faith and our faith. Let's ask God shall we, let's pray.

Father, we thank you today, for the gift of salvation. We thank You that while we are yet sinners, You gave Your Son, that He might be sin for us, that He might bear away our sins. Lord, this morning, we acknowledge that there is no other way; salvation must be by grace alone. And yet Lord, we recognize that we are called according to Your Word to have faith in Jesus Christ Your Son. Lord, I pray that You would take away presumption, that You would take away preconceived notions and allow us as we study these words, to examine our own lives if we be in the faith, to check our hearts, as we see ourselves in the mirror of the Bible, if we really have the authentic, genuine, saving faith that You have described in Your Bible. And so Lord, we pray that You will work in our hearts, I pray Spirit of God, You will mightily convince, convict and bring forth that response of man that is needed for faith in Jesus Christ alone. So Lord, bless Your people, bless the preaching of Your Word, make it clear, make it real to us, we pray and ask all this now in Jesus name, amen.

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Well, we are looking at Abraham's faith this morning.

Faith, do we really value it? There's a young boy who had just been to church and they had some handicraft, art and craft work and what they did was to write posters and drawings and for this boy, he had a beautiful piece of artwork and the main words that are written on this piece of artwork is "I have faith in God." Those beautiful words, beautiful drawing and he was really pleased with his art and craft, "I have faith in God". He was on the way home in a bus and he was admiring his piece of artwork when a gust of wind suddenly blew and it blew it out of his hands and it drifted out of the window and out of the bus. The boy immediately stood up and said "Uncle, uncle, please stop the bus, I have lost my faith in God." (Laughter in the congregation).

I think we would do well, if we are so concerned about our faith in God. This morning, as we see Abraham's faith, let us also be able to see our own faith in comparison, in parallel with the true faith of Abraham. This message is very simple in a sense, because it is really two parts. First of all, we are going to consider Abraham's faith and number two, we are going to see our own life. And so, the first portion is really an appreciation of Abraham's faith, the second part is an application of Abraham's faith in our own lives. So let's begin, let's look at Abraham's faith.

1. Abraham's faith

Abraham's faith, according to these words in Romans 4, revolves around a story. A story about how God will make Abraham a great, or the descendants of Abraham a great nation. Remember in Genesis 12, God appeared to Abraham and says "Abraham, I will make of thee a great nation."

Now, Abraham then had lots of money I think. He was a wealthy man, he was rich, he had cattle, he had livestock, he had servants serving him. So Abraham was a rich and powerful man but one thing Abraham didn't have was descendants. He had no child, yet God said in Genesis 12, that I would make of thee a great nation. Some 10 years later, fast forward when he was about 85 years old, 86 years old, God then said to Abraham, "Abraham, look at the sky, number the stars, so shall thy seed be."

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But, you know, Abraham had already waited for about 10 years and he still had no child. By the way, do you know how old Abraham was, when there was a child is born? This is strange, how old was Abraham when he had a child, ... he was 99? Actually the answer is... not 99 years old, but when he was.. what? 99, no not 99. 99 was the year, Abraham, or Sarah was pregnant, I think. Yeah, that's right 100, Ha, Ha, Ha. With great affirmation, he says 100 years. Abraham had to wait how long? 25 years. I mean, God does appear to Abraham when he was 75 and it was only when he was 100 that he had a child by Sarah, Isaac.

And so, he had to wait a long time. But throughout this time, we could see Abraham's faith. Now, let's consider the faith of this dear man of God.

In verse 18, we are told that Abraham, hope against hope, who against hope, believed in hope.

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.

The word against hope means that this was really, humanly speaking a hopeless situation. It was humanly impossible that Abraham should have a child. Why is it impossible? Well, the Bible tells us in verse 19

Because his body in his own eyes, are now, is now considered dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb.

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:

Abraham is already advanced in age and his wife Sara, if I may say, is now postmenopausal, she is beyond child bearing age and all around Abraham is death. There's not going to be life coming out of my loins, there's not going to be life coming out Sara's womb, it shriveled, it's small, there is no way they can be a child.

But Abraham's faith was against hope, it was against human thinking. In fact, I think it was John Calvin who humorously said, "That Abraham and Sara were closer to the grave then to the marriage bed." (Laughter in the congregation). It was a humanly impossible situation.

Now, 25 years ago it might be possible, when they were 75, when Abraham is 75 and when Sara is 65. It might have been possible then. But God had waited in a sense, for 25 years. It's almost as if God is saying, I want your natural strength to decline and eventually disappear, because it is only when it is hopeless for you, then I will fulfill My promises and show Myself strong. But Abraham's faith is one that holds up in the face of human impossibilities.

I like what George Mueller said

“There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man’s power ends.”

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And so it is, Abraham and Sara, they knew that humanly speaking, there is no way they could have a child. But this is when faith comes into the picture in the Bible tells us, it is against hope that Abraham believed in hope.

How do I know Abraham believed in hope? Well the Bible says so and that is an interesting account. If you look at Genesis 17:5, you would realize that God said to Abraham, now, Abraham and Sara have not had any signs of pregnancy yet, but it is at that point of time when God said to Abraham, Abraham, I want to change your name. What was Abraham's original name? Abram and what does Abram mean? I asked the first congregation first service and none could give the answer so, maybe some of you here might help. What is the meaning of Abram? Anyone? You guys must be waiting for me to offer the lunch thing again; by the way, I still owe Chloe a lunch, Chloe are you here? Ah, yah, I owe you lunch, you didn't claim from me. You

know, you don't mean by faith, you have nothing. (Laughter in the congregation). This is grace, I know, that's not grace, you have earned it, alright, but you need to claim it. Ah, anyone, Abram's meaning, was the meaning of Abram? Aiyah, your use the technology, not fair. All right, it's high fathers, or exalted father, that's what Abram means. But God says, Abram, I'm going to change a name from Abram to Abraham and what is the meaning of Abraham? Father of many nations or father of the multitudes. And Abraham change his name and could imagine what it really meant. Imagine, people coming to Abraham's dwelling place, and they came in and said "Sir, thank you for receiving me, my name is John, can I ask you what's your name?" Oh, my name is Abraham, it means father of the multitudes. Oh, you're the father of multitudes, so, how many children do you have? I have one by Hagar, my handmaid, I have none by Sara, my wife.

Hah, hah, you have one, how many? I have none, I have zero, I have a big fat zero. Sir, sir, what's your name again? My name is Abraham, the father of multitudes.

You know, how embarrassing it would be for Abraham. I think it's embarrassing, his servants would say, "Are you sure you're called Abraham? There's not even a child, there's not even an egg that comes out of Sara, how could you call yourself the father of the multitudes."

But Abraham, believed in hope against hope, he believed. But why is it that he believed? I mean, he couldn't get any comfort from the people around him. Look at himself; it's hopeless. If there was an interviewer that day from CNN or so that will ask Abraham, "Abraham, why are you called Abraham?" Because, I believe I would be a father of many nations. "

So, Abraham, don't you think you a little bit too old for this ?

Abraham says, yah, yah, actually, I look at my body, cannot make it already, I am too old.

But, what about your wife?

Yes, Sara is also a little bit too old.

You think anyone has done this before, Abraham.

Abraham says, "No, I have not heard of this before."

But, Abraham, why is it that you believe you can have a child?

And Abraham would take a deep breath, look into the camera and say "Because, I believe in God."

I am not looking at the things around me, I'm not even looking at myself, I am looking at God.

This is what Abraham would say, because in verse 17, Paul tells us

he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

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.

You see, Abraham realized the difficulties. He's not blur, and he's not ignorant of the fact that his body is already incapable and Sara's body is also already incapable. He's not looking at the circumstances, but he's looking upwards to God; my faith looks up to Thee, he might say.

He's looking, and reckoning and believing that there is a greater power and a greater reality and that is God.

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What is God, who is God ? He is God that can bring to life that which is dead and create out of nothing and therefore, not denying that the fact that his body is old, Sara is old, he is defying it, because he has eyes that look up to a greater power and a greater reality that is God.

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I believe that genuine faith is not denying facts, but it is defying facts. Can I say that again, "Faith is not denying facts, it is defying facts." Yes, I am stricken with an illness, yes, I am sick now, yes, I am stricken with cancer, but I do believe that if God wants to heal me, He can.

It is very different from ignorance, you know. There's some people who think that faith is simply ignorance, faith is simply denying that there is a problem. No,

Abraham knew that there was a problem, but he knew that there was Someone Who was greater than his problem.

I want you, even right now, to think of a humanly impossible situation in your life. You are surrounded by death, you are surrounded by thoughts or comments by people, you cannot, you cannot, you cannot, you cannot, you cannot and would you ask God to show you such situations in your life even right now.

Maybe it's your child, looks like a hopeless situation, maybe it's your family, you are about to face divorce and it seems impossible for the family to be reconciled, to be healed. You look at your husband, it's not possible, you look at your self, you have no desire. But would you look to God and reckon the greater power and reality.

That's what Abraham did, he looked up to God.

I think, one of the blessings of being a child of God, who loves and believes the Word, is that we can face the realities of life and not have to deny them.

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This week, my wife and I, we had the privilege to visit some members of our church who are in trials and may I say, some are in great trials. You can't go there and say, that's not a problem, don't worry about it, it will get well or that's not a disease, that's not a sickness, that's nothing. No, you cannot deny that there is a real problem, there is a real difficulty. But at the same time, we must not forget that there is a greater power that can defy the odds as it were.

When we were leaving one of the couples place, we were driving, I was driving out of the carpark lot and my wife said a statement and she said "It is often in trials that we will really see how much we believe in God." I think that's right. When things are going your way, when things are smooth and easy, where then is the need to trust in God in spite of our circumstances. It's all with us. But when God puts us in difficult circumstances, when the circumstances say no, that is a time when we lift up our eyes and say, God, is there a yes ?

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Faith, does not deny the facts, but it defies the facts when we lift up our eyes unto God.

I'm thankful, for the grace of God in both my wife and my life. When our son was stricken with, or when we first knew that he was diagnosed with autism, the grace of God I think, as I look back is clear, because we did not deny the fact. We did not try to hide it, we did not try to say, no, this cannot be happening to me. Well, it's here, but at the same time, we did not discourage, we are not discouraged, we did not despair, because we believe God, who can quicken the dead and called those things which did not as though they were, there is a greater reality and He is God.

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Would you lift up your eyes, likewise? That is the faith of Abraham, of faith that looks up to God. But let's get specific here. What is it about God that Abraham believed in, what is it that Abraham could be so clear that he would have a child, that he's willing to call himself the father of many nations. A clue is given to us in verse 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.

I learned something about faith here. Faith is looking up to God and let's be specific, it's not only looking up to God in general, but is recognizing and relying on what God has, can I hear the word, "spoken, or said". faith is relying and resting on what God specifically says. In fact, this is so repeated, you can't miss it.

Verse 20, the Bible says

20 He staggered not at the promise of God

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

In verse 21, he says

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

It does not rest on our circumstances or on our feelings, or on what man says. True faith, looks up to God and in particular on what God has said.

This morning, you can have faith, because the Bible tells us, faith, comes by hearing and hearing, by the Word of God.

The word here that is translated, in the Greek, is the word Rhema, as contrasted to an other quick word, logos. Logos refers to the whole body of truth, but Rhema, refers to the specific truth. Logos, is made up of many, many Rhema, and faith is predicated, it's abounded is based on the clear, specific promises of God.

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And Abraham, had a clear specific promise of God, so shall thy seed be. And so, Abraham said yes, Lord, I am old, Sarah is old, nobody has done it before, but I'm not looking for these things, I am looking to You and in particular, what You had said. I remember that night that You said, "So shall thy seed be." And I, against hope believed in hope.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Rhema of God.

And so, faith is like Transformers, that is more to it than meets the eye. It's more than what you could see, is not on the circumstances you see. But the writer of Hebrews say, "Faith is the substance, or the confidence of things hoped for, the evidence, or the convincing of things not seen."

I can't see any child coming out of my loins or from Sarah's womb, but it's okay, my faith is on God's Word.

Didn't Paul exhorts us, "For we walk not by sight but by faith." That's what it is. Seeing God's Word even though circumstances conspire in a sense against us. So that is the great faith of Abraham.

I like what Andrew Murray said, just a succinct definition of what faith is.

“Faith is resting and relying on the sure promises of God”

That's it. Do you know what is superstition? What is superstition? Superstition is a kind of belief isn't it, but it is different from biblical faith because, superstition is resting and relying on the..., you know if a black cat crosses your path, you have bad luck the whole day. Chinese new year, you must, you must must you sweep or must you not sweep, oh, you must not sweep, okay. Chinese new year, you must not sweep the floor, don't break the mirror on your wedding day or whatever else.

Now, superstition and faith, was the difference, what's the difference, both are beliefs? The difference is in the, sorry, in the logic? The object of faith. The difference is in the foundation of that belief.

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True biblical faith is resting on the promises, the Word of God. Superstition is resting on the words of man. That's what it is. What is daydreaming ? Oh, I really think I will become a handsome prince, that's daydream lah. But daydreaming is believing in, in what, in what God says? No, it's a believe in what you imagine. But true faith is based on simply the Word of God, resting and relying on the sure promises of God.

So, here it is, Abraham believed God and what God had promised to him and it defied the odds, it defied circumstances. It was as overcoming and victorious as that. So, let me recap. He believed in what was spoken by God, so shall thy seed be. He staggered not at the promise of God, he was standing squarely on the promises of God, he was fully persuaded with regards to what God has promised.

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Can I ask you, Abraham had to believe for a long time, 25 years. During this 25 years, he was holding on, clinging on to the Word of God, were there times he doubted ? I mean, let's be real here, we all say, not all but most of us say we believe in Jesus, we have faith in Jesus. But are there moments in your life when you doubted? Yes, ah? Aiyah, you all are in trouble! (Laughter in the congregation), no I'm kidding.

So, are there times when Abraham's faith was in a sense shaken and he doubted? Where, when, where, when ? All right, there was one time when Sarah says, "Abraham I think I cannot make it anymore. So, maybe you should go in to Hagar, our handmaid and she would bear you a son. Well, that was taking things into their own hands, that maybe not right, it is not right, on hindsight of course.

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But there is another passage, that gives us a peek into Abraham's heart, Genesis 17:17. The Bible says

Gen 17:17

Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

He would say, are you sure God ? Is it for real, I mean, I am already hundred and my wife is 90, is there any chance, we'll have a child.

I think there were times in Abraham's life that doubts assailed him, but one thing I learned about genuine faith is that it works through the doubts.

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Can I suggest to you, that having doubts is not the problem. It's what you do with those doubts that is the core issue. How you handle doubts is what matters. It's like temptations. We face temptations. Temptation is not equal to sin, but it's when we give in, when we cave in to temptation, that's when we sin. And having doubts assail us, it's natural, it's there but it's how we go through those doubts that matters. Genuine faith would always struggled through doubts and then on the right side.

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In our church, we have been starting on or enjoying that process of discipleship and we gather in groups, we go through the Bible and we help each other, intentionally grow in Jesus Christ. In one of the sessions we go through, there is a material that we use and there is a beautiful statement that captures this, it goes something like this.

The opposite of faith in the living God is not doubt;it is unbelief.

Think about it, the opposite of faith in the living God is not doubt because doubts come, but it is unbelief, that settled choice, not the belief. It goes on to say "Doubt only needs more facts but unbelief is disobedience, refusing to acknowledge and follow God's truth.

You're going to have doubts assail us, doubts will be thrown at us, but how would you handle those doubts?

True faith, emerges victorious always. It works through those questions and it comes forth victorious.

I like what John Calvin said, he said

"We are never so enlightened that there are no remains of ignorance, nor is the heart so established that there are no misgivings. With these evils of our nature, faith maintains a perpetual conflict in which conflict it is often sorely shaken and put to great stress (Added by Pastor : But the last part is true) but always it conquers."

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There's a song we sing, standing on the promises of God

Standing on the promises that cannot fail, sure promises, When the howling storms of doubt & fear assail, it comes, but, By the living Word of God I shall prevail, Standing on the promises of God.

Time stamp in audio 0:37:08.4.

I was with some men yesterday morning and we were sharing, sharing about our devotional life, what God has spoken to us and there was a brother who shared that he was in great pain for three weeks of his life, he's a believer, a follower of Jesus and for 3 weeks of his life, when he was afflicted with great pain, questions come into his mind, why God, do you allow this to happen to me, do you even care for me, are you there, are you real and in the midst of his pain, he had doubts assailing him. But he does share that always in those times, he comes forth and he could say, "I still believe."

It's like Abraham, too faith always emerges on the right side, that victorious side, I still believe. So, true faith is resting and relying on the sure promises of God. Yes, there will be doubts and fears that come, but it always lands on the safe side, on the right side.

Time stamp in audio 0:38:16.5.

I want to ask you a question right now or I want to share with you something that is important to grasp. Not only do we see Abraham's faith is premised upon the Word of God, we going to see the perseverance of Abraham's faith. It's a faith endures, it's a faith that lasts.

Let me share with you these verses, first 19

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: (Added by Pastor :Note his age, 100 years old)

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.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Now, Paul tells us, it was imputed to Abraham for righteousness at this stage, when Abraham is how old, when he is about? Hundred years old. Now, do you remember an earlier time, where God likewise, imputed to Abraham righteousness, was there an earlier time, when the same, almost the same statement was made, it should not be that difficult? So, once at hundred years old, the other time was when he was? 75? No, 75 was when he was called out Ur of Chaldees, modern day Iraq.

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When he was about 85, 86. Now, I'm going to help you alright, it's going to be easy in a little chart. Look at this in Genesis 15. We know he is about 85 or maybe a little bit younger, I am not sure, but certainly not more than 85, 86 years old. In Genesis 15, God brought Abraham out into the wilderness into the open skies and say "Look at the stars, so shall thy seed be." And Scriptures record for us, "Abraham believed in God and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

So, when he was 85, 86 and that's what Romans 4:3 attests to. But fast forward another 15 years or so and in Genesis 17 which is what we read this morning and he Romans 4:22

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

This time, he is about 99, close to 100 years old. There is a third time in Genesis 22 when he's aged more than 101 years old, this is a time when either is already born in Genesis 21 and God calls Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. And when Abraham was willing to do so, when Abraham was about to do so, this whole act was an act of faith and James records for us, "Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness."

What am I trying to get at here? Very simple, the faith of Abraham was not a faith, was not a momentary decision that begins and ends there. He did not believe in Genesis 15 and then, forgot all about it. But that genuine faith of Abraham is one that endures and perseveres. It is one that keeps on believing, when he's 85, when he's 99 or when he's older, he keeps on believing. Genuine faith keeps on believing.

Time stamp in audio 0:42:18.4.

Maybe you know a friend, who has professed, I believe in Jesus, but ever since then he has never come back to the Word of God, he has never walk with God. You got to ask yourself, does he really have genuine faith because genuine faith, biblically speaking, is one that perseveres and endures.

Hebrews 6:12, 15 I share with you last week, that there are three months of genuine faith. There would be a first of all, a coupling with repentance, number two, there will be results. Genuine faith, results in good works because it is not dead, it is a life principle, it brings forth fruits and the third aspect of genuine faith is resilience, he keeps on believing, it's a lifelong process, it's a life principle, it's not a momentary decision that lapses thereafter.

Hebrews 6 tells us that Abraham is an example for us, that we would not be slothful, but we would be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. And Abraham, so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. There is that endurance, the perseverance of genuine faith.

Time stamp in audio 0:43:44.1.

I am going to share with you a series of verses here, Habakkuk 2:4, this is where it first begins, God says in the book of Habakkuk

The just shall live by faith. It is a life principle, it is an ongoing life principle.

(Hab 2:4) "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith."

Paul explains it even more in Romans 1:17

The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. It's from faith to faith to faith to faith because the just shall live by faith.

(Rom 1:17) "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

Galatians 3:11, the just shall live by faith.

(Gal 3:11) "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith."

Hebrews 10:38 now, the just shall live by faith and if any man draw back, stop believing, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

(Heb 10:38) "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

So, authentic, life-saving, biblical faith, is not a flash in the pan, it's not a fireworks in the sky that shines for a moment and extinguishes the next. It is a lasting, burning flame that goes on and on and you would say, I still believe that goes through the trials of life and you would come forth and say "I still believe, I still believe, I still believe." That's genuine faith according to the Bible and in the life of Abraham.

This is the human aspect. The divine aspect is that God preserves. I see in Philippians 1:6

Phi 1:6

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

That human perspective is that I will keep believing, the divine aspect is that I will preserve. You see, this is a guaranteed chain of events, if I may say Romans 8:30

Rom 8:30

Moreover whom he did predestinate (Added by Pastor : He chose, He elected), them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

I see a beautiful unbroken chain when it is a genuine work of God. When God chooses, He glorifies. There's not a chance that it would be broken because it is God who is doing it. So, God preserves His saints, but at the very same time, that human

angle is that the saints keep on believing. And there is that harmony of Scriptures that we need to strike at.

Time stamp in audio 0:46:20.7.

So, I see the genuine nature of Abraham's faith because he kept believing in the Lord. So, I hope you're not "chimed" out (colloquial as in deep), I hope you're still following me, very simple, let's put it in a kind of a recap.

Abraham's faith, was in the midst of a humanly impossible circumstances, when death is all around him. But, he looked not at circumstances, he looked at God and in particular the sure promises of God and Abraham's faith works through doubts. It always lands on the right side at the end of the day. Abraham's faith is one that endures. That's what our faith should be like, that we would keep on believing in God and Jesus Christ His Son.

Time stamp in audio 0:47:06.9.

But, there's one more point about Abraham's faith and that is why, faith, what's the purpose of faith? I see the answer in verse 20 of this text, the Bible says

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

I like what Martin Lloyd Jones said, very simple but it is absolutely true.

The essence of faith, is giving glory to God.

The essence of faith, is giving glory to God.

Contrasts, let's say, I am bringing my son to swim one day and he is out there, by the poolside, I am in the water. want to encourage Shaun to swim and so, I say "Shaun, jump, daddy will catch you, don't worry, daddy is strong, daddy is kind, daddy loves you, daddy will catch you." And so, I make the invitation to my son, "Shaun, please jump." And then, my son looks at me, "You ah, I don't want." He walks away. Now, in his mind, he is either thinking, daddy can't catch me or daddy won't catch me. But in either case, the response he made of not jumping into my arms, makes me very embarrassed, makes me loose face. I am embarrassed, that's how my son regards me. But when my son says, "Yes, dad, I will jump." And he jumps into my arms, actually I

feel good. He recognizes that I am strong enough and I love him enough and I am trustworthy enough to hold him as he jumps.

The essence of faith is believing God and that gives Him glory. Imagine, if you were Abraham and you were in his family that day and Abraham said to his servants, "You know, people, God spoke to me yesterday and my name is going to change, no more Abram, I'm going to be called Abraham, the father of multitudes." They look at him, "Are you sure, you have not even a single egg that comes out of Sara 's womb, how could you be called the father of multitudes?" But Abraham says "I believe, God will do it, He can do it and He will do it." By that statement, by that testimony, it gives glory to God because God is seen in Abraham's life to be powerful, loving, wise, faithful.

The essence of faith is giving glory to God. I cannot help but make a comparison between Romans 1:23 the Bible tells us, that man's problem is that we do change the glory of the un-corruptible God into an image made like to corruptible beast.

Rom 1:23

And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

The problem of man is that we desecrate the glory of God but the essence of faith is that we give glory to God. I think that's why in Hebrews 11, we are told, "Without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he that comes to God by faith must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

True faith pleases God because it glorifies Him.

On the other hand, in 1John 5:10

1John 5:10

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar..

1John 5:10

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son.

The fact that we would not believe in Jesus, the fact that we would not trust Him in His Word, is a testimony in our hearts that says "God, You're not worthy for my faith. I don't trust You enough to save me from sins, death and hell ." And that's why it's a great sin for us not to believe in Jesus Christ His Son.

The essence of faith is giving glory to God.

Time stamp in audio 0:51:19.6.

So, those are the thoughts I have for you with regards to Abraham's faith, digest it, think of it in your mind, but, it is not, like I said, a faith-based theoretical, about a man who lived thousands of years ago. The intent of Paul, giving us an understanding of Abraham 's faith, is that Abraham's faith to be in those who would believe in Jesus Christ. You see, he says in verse 23,

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;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;

in other words, Abraham 's faith, though a strong and powerful one, is not, to be in a sense, a unique one, because, it is to be a common experience for all those who have genuine faith in Christ, it is for us as well.

Time stamp in audio 0:52:18.9.

I think one of the best ways to teach is by exemplifying. Well, maybe there is a story that may help you.

There is a class, that is taking ornithology, do you know what is ornithology? What is, first service at three or four people thought of the answer straight away. Wah, you guys are good, how in the world you know it is about birds? You are right, it is about birds. Ornithology is about the study of birds and days a group of students that was taking a class on ornithology. It is a difficult class and couple with it, they have a very mean and difficult professor who taught that class. One day, the professor came in and says "Class, I want you to know that there will be a very important exam in a week's time, I want you to study very hard for it because I am going to assess whether you make or break, you succeed or you fail, you pass or you fail based on the exam in a week's time."

And so, the students ran back and study real hard, they poured through the books and exam day comes. It's a special exam, the professor just handed to them blank pieces of paper, no questions on it and subsequently, brought in five cases and the cages were all covered up, up to the, is from the top down and it left just a little part at the bottom, for you to be able to peek and see the legs of the bird.

The professor then said "Class, this is the exam, from what you see of the spindly legs, the tiny scrawny legs of these birds, I want you to tell me what these species are." The students were all bamboozled; who in the world would go and study the feet of the birds.

One student was particularly furious, he stood up and blurted "This is ridiculous, this is the craziest exam I ever been through, professor, you're crazy, you are nuts and I'm not going to take this exams, fail me for all you want." He threw his paper into the air, got up from his seat and was about to walk out. The professor stopped him in his tracks and said "Young man, stop right where you are." The young man stopped. The professor said, "Tell me what your name is so that I can fail you." The young man turned around and looked at the professor, pulled up his pants and said, "Look at this and tell me my name." (Laughter in the congregation). And then he walked out.

Time stamp in audio 0:55:04.3.

Well, the best way to teach is by exemplifying. What is one way for us to consider faith?. Well, you can talk a lot about faith, but what really helps is to see Abraham 's faith and I hope this morning, you would see his faith and examining yourself, thus your faith follow the father of faith's faith ? Is it like his faith, are you genuinely having authentic faith in Jesus Christ? The Bible tells us, now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed if we likewise believed. And what do we have to believe? We have to believe on Him that is God, that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.

Time stamp in audio 0:56:04.3.

Now, in these two verses you have the Gospel in a nutshell. This is what you need to believe, that Jesus is the Son of God, Who is the Only One Who could die and pay for our sins. God made Him sin for us that we might have that great exchange, that complete forgiveness, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. But Jesus not only die but He was risen, He was raised again, because He has conquered

sin, death and hell and you have got to have the same kind of Abrahamic faith and this, as Abraham had, is the promise God made to him, so shall thy seed be.

What justifies us, what allows us to receive the grace, the salvation of God- the faith like that of Abraham's.

Time stamp in audio 0:57:02.1.

Friends, is your faith like that of Abraham's. You know what was Abraham's faith like, it was a faith that was borne out, even in the midst of deadness. It was a faith, that was borne out even when there was no hope around him, he believed. My friends, true saving faith is this, when we recognize that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves and yet we believe in what God has said, that is true saving faith.

You see, the Bible tells us in Ephesians

Eph 2:4,5

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

True saving faith is like that of Abraham's, there is deadness, there is death, there is no chance for him to have a son, humanly speaking, but he believed and he had a son. Salvation, saving faith, is when we see all around us, deadness, death, there is no way man could earn his way to heaven, but we believe, like Abraham did that we can be saved by grace. And therefore, that beautiful verse we often look at

For by grace are ye saved through faith

Eph 2:8

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

What kind of faith, the faith of Abraham that took God at His Word, that faith of Abraham that works through doubt, that faith of Abraham that would persevere, it will keep you in a saving grace, the faith of Abraham that allows us to say, regardless of which juncture of life we are at, I still believe. Do you have that faith this morning, was your faith real, is your faith real and for those who have yet to trust in Christ, my friends, this is the only way for salvation and for life, whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

Let's bow, and with the words you have heard this morning, I want you to examine your life, is between you and God this morning. It's not about us, it's not about me, it's about you and God. Maybe you have been raised in a Christian home and you have assumed that being born in a Christian home, you are a Christian. Then we say to you, you are not a Christian because you're born in a Christian home. You are a Christian only as you follow Christ in faith and is not mere intellectual assent, it is not simply agreeing, is to have that wholehearted commitment and trust in what God says and in particular, about what He says about His Son, how He was crucified for our sins and how He was raised again. It's a faith that is a life principle, it is a lifelong process, it's not a momentary decision that fades out thereafter. My friends, this is a tremendously important decision, don't you see? It makes the whole difference with regards to salvation and condemnation. It makes a whole difference between heaven and hell. If we are to be saved by grace and it is through faith, we need to be sure it is genuine faith. What kind of faith? Abraham's faith.

Would you today, ask God for mercy, to have mercy on you, just like I did some years ago in my life. Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner, give me the gift of faith, this life principle and ask God today to save you. My friends, don't live in delusions and presumptions. I can't imagine the shock on that day when we appear before God and He says to you, "Many shall call me Lord, Lord, and I would say unto them, I never knew you." Why, because there was no genuine faith. Ah friends, men cannot detect it, but God knows and so, in this time, would you be honest with your God. Cry out for mercy. Father, this morning, we are stirred to examine Abraham's faith and in the light of his faith, examine our own faith. We thank You that salvation is by grace through faith and therefore, as You have spoken this morning, would You give us that faith that is from heaven above. God, would You have mercy, that none, right here this morning, would remain outside the kingdom of God. Thank You for the life of Abraham, thank You for Paul, clarifying the types of faith. And so, dear God, teach us, work in our hearts, Spirit of God, do that work which men could never do. May we be born again from on high. Bless Your people, we ask and pray all this in Jesus name, amen. God bless.