

The Nature of Faith

Romans 4:18-25 **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, 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.**" 23 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.**

❖ Intro: Very Brief....

- **These words are written for our benefit**
- **23 But the words "it was counted to him"** were not written for **his sake** alone, 24 but for **ours** also.

❖ Review

- **1) We Have an Inheritance**
- **2) Our Inheritance Rests on Grace through Faith**
- **3) The Inheritance is to all who share Abraham's Faith**
- **4) The One Who Gives Life and Existence is Our Absolute Assurance**
- **5) The Wrath of God is as Certain as the Promised Inheritance**
- **Response**

❖ Outline

- **The Story of Abraham:**
- **Abraham: The Historical Illustration of Faith**
- **1) He Believed**
- **2) His Faith did not Weaken**
- **3) He did not Waver**
- **4) His Faith Glorified God**
- **5) His Faith Was Counted to Him as Righteousness**
- **6) We Must Mimic the Faith of Abraham**

❖ The Story of Abraham:

- **It is found in Genesis 12-25**
 - In this story we see the call of Abraham and his faith
 - As well as some of his missteps along the way
- **In chapter 12 He is called Abram which means: the Father of Many**
 - And the name does not quite fit him because he is the father of no one
 - He is a Chaldean... he is from the land of Ur of the Chaldeans
- **The Land of Ur and the Chaldeans...**
 - This likely lies east of the land of Israel
 - And Ur was a very rich area at that time
 - **Don't think desert... because it was b/w two rivers... and it was in what is called**
 - The fertile crescent
 - This land was likely inhabited by the descendants of Noah's Son Shem
 - And, Abram lived there in Ur with his kindred
 - **His Father was a descendent of Noah's Son Shem...**
 - It has been about 500 years since the flood

- As a matter of fact...Abram could have known Shem... who was on the Ark during the flood
- He might have known Noah... many think Noah died about 2 years before Abram was born
- **But Abram lived in a time when many people worshipped false gods**
 - People had already forgotten what God had done...
 - Which does not surprise me at all...
 - IN 500 years you can wonder pretty far from God...
 - Especially if you do not teach children the ways of God
 - This should be handed down from generation to generation
- **He lived with His father...**
- **Abram's Father's name was Terah...**
 - And Terah took his son Abram and Sarah as well as his grandson Lot and they left Ur
 - To go to Canaan... which is today the land of Israel
 - But they made a stop in a place called Haran (which is just north of Israel)
- **Haran is where God calls Abram out of the land of his family and Father....**
 - **Genesis 12:1-4 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. ² 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. ³ 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." ⁴ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.**
- **He Departs and heads to Canaan... the land God would give to Israel...**
 - Scripture says that God appeared to Abram
 - Abram worshipped God in this land
 - **Abram built alters and sacrificed to God**
 - So you see that Abram's faith was strong
 - And he understood he must offer sacrifices in faith to cover his sin
 - This was a foreshadowing of the way in which God would cover the sins of those who believe
 - Abram understood that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin
 - **I doubt Abram understood things to the extent that we do after all these years...**
 - But Jesus said of Abraham....
 - That He longed for the day of Jesus coming...
 - And that Abraham saw it and He rejoiced...
 - **So, we see here at an early stage in Abram's walk with God,**
 - that He had a faith in what God would do
 - Now: We have faith in what God has done... and still will do
- **So, Abram was in Canaan... and there was a famine**
 - So, he left and went into Egypt...
 - And here he said that Sarah was his sister so the Egyptians would kill him
 - They took her, but God afflicted them
- **Abram then leaves Egypt with his nephew Lot**
 - They get really big and Abram gives Lot all the land that he wants
 - And they separate
 - Lot and his family are soon captured by some kings in a war that was going on
 - Abram take 318 of his trained men, and they defeat (I think 4 kings)
 - And bring back his kinsman and their possessions
- **Abram then meets up with a priest of the Most High God**
 - Melchizedek... and he pays a tithe to him
 - The priest of God blesses Abram

- Genesis 14:19-20 ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰ and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”

➤ **God renews His promise to Abram**

- Genesis 15:1-6 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” ² But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” ⁴ And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” ⁵ And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ⁶ And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.
- He then seals His promise to Abram with a sacrifice and a covenant
 - And God swears by Himself that He will do it
 - He tells Abram of his people’s future and how they will be afflicted for 400 years
 - But God promises to come and save them

➤ **Then the story turns**

- Sarai talked Abram into having her servant Hagar
- Hagar became pregnant
- She looked at sarai with contempt...
- The child Ishmael was born
- This was a child born of the schemes of man... when Abram was 86
 - Abram at this point tried to do a run around God
 - Abram tried to do things his on way
 - So Ismael was a child of the flesh
 - He was not of promise
- Now, there is a lot of that God is trying to teach us through all of this...
 - That we are to trust in God and wait on His promises

➤ **God comes again to Abram**

- And he renews the covenant with Abram at 99 years old...
- And it is here that the covenant sign of circumcision is introduced
- Genesis 17:1-5 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, ² that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” ³ Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, ⁴ “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations

➤ **God renewed His promise to Abraham...**

- And Abram asked that Ishmael would be the son
- But, God said, the son of promise will come from your wife
- God visited Him again and said, I will return to you this time next year and your wife will have a son
- Abram believed God’s Word... while sarah laughed and could hardly believe

➤ **God gives Abraham Isaac**

- Abraham and Sarai rejoice in the fulfilled promise of God
- But there was still more promise to come... more that God would do...

➤ **Now... in all of this... Abraham’s faith was strong...**

- It was not perfect... And he made some mistakes along the way
- But He never stopped trusting in God

- Even though he tried to help God out a little bit by having Ishmael
- His Faith remained
- **This is seen perfectly when God tells Abraham to offer up his only son as a sacrifice**
 - **Genesis 22:1-2** After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” ² He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”
 - But, Abraham believed God could raise Isaac from the dead...
 - At the moment of sacrifice, God stopped him
 - And in the thicket there was a ram to be used for sacrifice...
 - All of this was foreshadowing the coming of God’s one and only son
 - Who would be offered up as a sacrifice
 - This act of Faith by Abram pleased God
- **What is God doing here in the story of Abraham?**
 - He is giving us an Illustration of faith...

❖ **Abraham: The Historical Illustration of Faith**

- **In the same way that we would use an analogy to explain an idea or thing**
 - God uses People in history to illustrate to humanity how He Works
 - God uses people like Abraham to explain and to foreshadow many marvelous things
- **You will get to see this at work today within the text**
 - If I can do it justice
- **What is an analogy? For some of you who are wondering...**
 - **Well...** it is something we all use very often to help us explain a certain idea or thing to someone
 - We may even use something very different to help us explain our idea
 - Often, we will use metaphors and similes to help us (parents... just ask your kids)
 - **We may try to illustrate how a writer uses his pen....**
 - We would say: Just as a sword is the weapon of a warrior, a pen is the weapon of a writer.
 - Or we may say: Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what your gonna get
- **Throughout the Old Testament: God does this in a grand scale**
 - From the creation of Adam to the call of Abraham
 - to the people of Israel being led out of slavery by Moses....
 - Even to the setting up of the law and tabernacle and sacrificial system
 - **All of these things are God’s way of explaining to us humans:**
 - ◆ “just exactly what He is Saying and Doing”
 - **Much of what we see** in the O.T. is God’s way of telling people of the past, present and future
 - ◆ Look to Me, See who I Am, See what I do, See what I expect, See what I did... and see what I am going to do... Ready yourself
- **In the Story of Abraham:**
 - **God Illustrates to mankind how they can be right with God**
 - **He shows them His creative power and His resurrection power**
 - By bringing Isaac from a dead womb and dead seed
 - **He shows His promises are by Grace**
 - By calling Abraham and swearing by his own name
 - He was good to Abraham separate from Abraham’s works
 - **He foreshadows His plan of salvation**
 - By commanding Abraham to sacrifice his only son
 - Only to stop him... and then provide a ram to be sacrificed
 - Which is another foreshadow of what would happen to the Son of God

- **In the Story of Abraham**
 - God wants us to see how it was that Abraham was made right with God
 - Abraham is your example here today of how to be saved...
- **These things are written for our sake... for our benefit**

❖ 1) He Believed

- **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 believed what God told him

❖ 2) His Faith did not Weaken

- **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.
- **Even though it seemed impossible...**
 - He did not look at his old body or his wife's old body and doubt God would do it
 - His faith was in God to do the impossible

❖ 3) He did not Waver

- **20 No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God**
- **No unbelief made him waver...**
 - Waver here means... to pause or hold back in uncertainty
 - There is the meaning of let me evaluate this really carefully
- **Unbelief is such a serious sin toward God...**
 - Unbelief is very offensive toward God
 - When men do not believe God... who is infinitely trustworthy God is dishonored
- **How are you doing with your belief?**
 - Are you trusting in the promises God has made toward you?
 - Are you wavering? Do you pause at what God promises His followers?
 - Has unbelief kept in?
- **Unbelief dishonors God in the greatest of ways...**
 - It is the root of many many sins against God...
 - It is not a harmless sin...
- **What are you struggling to believe God about?**
 - Abram waited decades... some things he never even saw their fulfillment
 - But God came through with His promises...
- **Why do we try to grab what God has not given us?**
 - It only leads to heartache
- **Why do we fret and worry when God says He is faithful...?**
- **I may be about to make some of you very mad...**
 - You may think I am very insensitive...
 - And I do not say this lightly...
 - I am no doctor... and I am not God... But I do know what God has said...
- **But many many of you in here struggle with Anxiety and Worry...**
 - Because your faith is not strong in God
 - Unbelief has kept in...
- **I do not doubt that certain people have a greater disposition toward anxiety**
 - Due to the falleness of their bodies...
 - And problems with chemicals in their bodies
 - And the body revolts at times...

- **But, I know Jesus told us not to worry**
 - He told us to fix our eyes on the Father who loves us
 - He reminded us we are more important to Him than sparrows
- **Look to the Word... this is not written for no reason...**
 - **Matthew 6:25-34** ²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴ “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.
 - **Let this sink into the depths of your soul...**
 - **Proverbs 3:5-8** Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. ⁷ Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. ⁸ It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.
 - **Here the wisdom of God here...**
 - **Philippians 4:6-7** ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
 - Here is the remedy to anxiety
 - Notice... No where are we ever expected to never have anxiety or worry...
 - It is what we do with it when it comes that is important
- **Keep the promises of God before you at all times...**
 - I am not saying that believing will take away your anxiety...
 - But, I know it will be a strong and faithful friend in your anxieties...
 - Do you see what I am saying?
- **Where else could your belief be wavering?**

❖ 4) His Faith Glorified God

- **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**
- **He Gave Glory to God...**
 - **What does it mean to give glory to God...?**
 - In short: It is to live in such a way that makes God look good
 - By living in such a way as to display God as glorious...
 - You can not add to God’s glory
 - ◆ but you can reflect it and you can proclaim it and you can illustrate it
- **We Throw this phrase out there willy nilly don’t we...**
 - Oh... I just want to glorify God with my life
 - Let’s honor God... I want to bring glory to God...
 - For many of us it is nothing more than a hollow vain repetitious babble

➤ **Prime Examples:**

- **Oh, let me honor God with my mouth**
 - Yet we spill out curses and gossip while holding our tongue when we should witness
- **Oh, let me glorify God with my body**
 - Yet we use our eyes for lusting and coveting
 - We use our hands to take or harm or binge
- **Oh, let me glorify God with my finances**
 - Yet we hold on to our money... we say God understands...
 - We keep it for ourselves... the small amount of 10% is too much
 - But... oh how I love to glorify God!
- **Oh, let me glorify God with my time**
 - Yet we either work too much, or work too little, or play too much
 - We don't give our time to the Lord as we ought
 - ◆ God is honored when we work, rest, play, spend time with family or serving church...
 - ◆ But we like to do with our time as we please
- **Oh, let me glorify God with my thoughts**
 - Yet our thoughts are on everything but God
 - His Word rarely crosses through the canals of our brains
- **Oh, let me glorify God by suffering or waiting and hoping**
 - Yet, we cower at persecution... we throw pity parties
 - We do not endure
 - We won't wait for the promises of God... we want it now

➤ **Jesus Says:**

- **Matthew 15:8** This people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me

➤ **He (Abraham) Gave Glory to God**

- Notice what is being said here about how Abraham glorified God
- As He gave glory to God.... He grew strong in his faith...
- He is giving glory to God... His faith is growing strong
- How is He giving glory to God? Notice the phrase immediately following:
 - **fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised**

➤ **Abraham was fully convinced that God would do what He promised**

- Fully Convinced...

➤ **When you are fully convinced by God**

- This brings glory to God

❖ **5) His Faith Was Counted to Him as Righteousness**

- **22** That is **why** his faith was **"counted to him as righteousness."** **23** But the words **"it was counted to him"** were not written for **his sake** alone, **24** but for **ours** also.

➤ **Faith credits the person of faith with righteousness in the eyes of God**

- This is what Paul is trying to prove...
- It was not Abraham's works... rather, it was simply His faith.....

➤ **This is written not just in regards to Abraham...**

- But also for our sake...

❖ **6) We Must Mimic the Faith of Abraham**

- **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.

➤ **There are a number of things going on in this particular verse:**

- First: We see that we too can be counted a righteous...
 - If we can see these three things...
 - Even though we may not see them clearly or perfectly
 - We must believe them
- 1) We see the object of our belief
- 2) We see the actions of the object of our belief
- 3) We see what the object of our belief accomplished by His actions
- **First: What must we do to be counted as righteous:**
 - **It will be counted to us who believe in him**
- **1) We see the object of our belief**
 - **in him who raised from the dead Jesus**
 - M
- **2) We see the actions of the object of our belief**
 - **raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.**
 - Delivered
 - Raised
- **3) We see what the object of our belief accomplished by His actions**
 - **raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.**
 - Trespasses Covered
 - Justification Accomplished

❖ Invitation

- Are you Ready to Mimic the Faith of Abraham?
- Not all faith is the same... some is stronger and some is weaker...
 - And we grow in it as we grow in God...