

ABRAHAM'S FAITH

TEXT: ROMANS 4:17-25

INTRODUCTION:

1. In Romans chapter 4, Abraham's faith is used as an illustration of faith in us.
2. The faith which God requires from us is exactly the same as that which He required from Abraham.
3. Hebrews 11:8 says, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed..." Faith and obedience go together.
4. Over and over Paul has been teaching that no one could ever be saved by keeping the law (cf. 3:28). And he uses Abraham as an example of a believer saved by grace through faith.

I. ABRAHAM BELIEVED IN THE PERSON OF GOD (4:17).

1. "Before him whom he believed, even God..." (4:17). Faith must be centered upon a Person, and Abraham's faith was in God.
2. As his ship was about to crash in the midst of the tempestuous storm, the apostle Paul said to the men, "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God" (Acts 27:25).
3. The Lord Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Be not afraid, only believe" (Mark 5:36).
4. W.H. Griffith Thomas refers to a conversation a man had with a pastor. The man said, "It is so difficult to believe."
5. The pastor answered him, "To believe *Whom?*"
6. This reminds me of the conversion of the evangelist and pastor J. Wilbur Chapman. Chapman described it this way: "When the great evangelist, D. L. Moody, called for an after-meeting I was one of the first to enter the room, and to my great joy, Mr. Moody came and sat down beside me. I confessed that I was not quite sure that I was saved. He handed me his opened Bible and asked me to read John 5:24; and trembling with emotion I read: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.'"
7. "He said to me: 'Do you believe this?' I answered, 'Certainly.' He said, 'Are you a Christian?' I replied, 'Sometimes I think I am, and again I am fearful.' 'Read it again,' he said. Then he repeated his two questions, and I had to

answer as before. Then Mr. Moody inquired: 'Whom are you doubting?' and then it all came to me with startling suddenness.

8. "'Read it again,' said Moody, and for the third time he asked: 'Do you believe it?' I said, 'Yes, indeed I do.' 'Well, are you a Christian?' and I answered, 'Yes, Mr. Moody, I am.' From that day to this I have never questioned my acceptance with God."
9. Griffith Thomas said, "Faith is something real, concrete, definite, not theoretical, abstract. The emphasis must always be placed upon the Object of trust rather than upon the act of believing" (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*).

II. ABRAHAM BELIEVED IN THE POWER OF GOD (4:17-19).

1. Abraham believed in God who "quickeneth the dead" (4:17).
2. Abraham's son Isaac was brought into being by the same power that raised Christ from the dead (4:17-19).
3. Abraham was an old man and he was childless. The LORD told him that he would have a son.
4. "He that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:4-6; cf. Rom. 4:3).
5. Abraham was about 100 years old, so it would take strong faith to believe that.
6. God told Abraham to look up toward heaven and try and count the stars. "So shall thy seed be" (15:5).
7. "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (15:6). So the apostle Paul says, "As it is written (17:5), I have made thee (past tense) a father of many nations" (Rom. 4:17).
8. Abraham believed God – "even God, who quickeneth the dead" (4:17; cf. 4:19, 24b). Abraham believed in God who "calleth those things which be not as though they were" (4:17).
9. Humanly speaking it seemed pretty hopeless because of Abraham and Sarah's advanced age. But Abraham "against hope believed in hope" (4:18).
10. It seems like a contradiction but what Paul is saying is that even though things seemed hopeless, Abraham kept on believing in God and his faith gave him hope.
11. Faith always comes first. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith comes before hope and charity. We will never get anywhere without faith. In the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 17, verse 20, Jesus said: "If ye have faith as

a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

12. We need to get our minds off our circumstances and have faith in God. Here was Abraham, 100 years old, and his wife Sarah was nearly as old. God told him to look up to heaven, and count the stars. "So shall thy seed be" (Rom.4:18b).
13. "According to that which was spoken" (4:18) means Abraham took God at His Word. This is true faith.
14. "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead..." (4:19). Abraham's faith was not weak, but strong (4:20).

III. ABRAHAM BELIEVED IN THE PROMISES OF GOD (4:20, 21; cf. 4:13)

1. Abraham "staggered not" (4:20). The opposite of staggering is steadfast and sure-footed.
2. Abraham was not double-minded. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (4:20).
3. Unbelievers stagger and stumble. But Abraham "staggered not."
4. Abraham was "fully persuaded" in his mind that God was able to do what He said He'd do (4:21).
5. Here is where many people fail. They do not believe the Bible. They don't believe they're sinners. They don't believe they deserve to go to hell. They don't believe Christ can forgive their sins, and save them and give them eternal life.

He is able to deliver thee, He is able to deliver thee;

Though by sin oppressed, Go to Him for rest;

Our God is able to deliver thee.

6. Then there are others who believe God can save them, but they do not believe God answers prayer, can change their lives, direct them, etc.
7. Women do not believe God can provide a good Christian husband so they run off and marry unsaved men. Parents do not believe God can help them raise their kids so they go to the world for help.
8. Young people do not believe God can provide for them if they surrender for full-time Christian service so they refuse to go even though God is calling them.
9. Christians work on the Lord's Day because they don't believe God can provide the money they need to pay their bills.
10. Abraham was fully persuaded that God was able (4:21).

11. I came across some wonderful statements from John Bunyan: "Faith will help the soul to wait, though God defers to give, but unbelief will snuff and throw up all, if God makes any tarrying... Faith helpeth us when we are down, but unbelief throws us down when we are up... Faith makes the ways of God pleasant and admirable, but unbelief makes them heavy and hard."
12. Once again Paul repeats (because it is so very important), "And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (4:22).
13. Paul repeats this Scripture four times in this chapter. It is the key to the whole passage (4:3, 5, 9, 22).
14. The resurrection of Christ is the proof of our acceptance with God (4:24, 25).

CONCLUSION:

1. "Now it was not written for his sake alone... But for us also" (4:23, 24).
2. The book of Genesis is not merely historical; it is spiritual.
3. Paul says in I Corinthians 10:11, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition..."