

God's Promises Fulfilled Only By God's Power

By David Harrell

Romans 4:18-25

The title of my discourse to you this morning is "God's Promises Fulfilled Only by God's Power" and our text is Romans chapter four verses 18 through 25. Let me read this to you. Romans four beginning in verse 18.

n hope against hope he [referring to Abraham] believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE." And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore also IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.¹

God has made many promises to us and by faith we believe him. He has told us that it is appointed for man to die once and then judgment. But whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved from eternal punishment, will be justified, will be declared righteous, will be given eternal life. He has promised us that the blood of Christ will wash away all of our sins.

This is where the seedling of faith must begin. And if you have not believed the gospel, this is where you must begin. You must believe the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

But for those who know Christ the seed of faith must be watered by the Word. And it must be strengthened by the storm trials of life that it might grow into a mighty oak of confident trust in the Lord our God come what may. In fact, we are told that we are to grow in the grace and the knowledge of Christ.

So, as we prepare our hearts for the preaching of the Word this morning I would ask you, dear child of God, do you believe in the promises of God? Indeed, he has granted us his precious and magnificent promises Peter has told us. Do you believe that God has justified you by grace through faith? Do you really believe that? Do you believe that your salvation is secure, that the Lord preserves all that love him as the Scriptures teach, that nothing can separate you from the love of God. Do you believe that? Do you believe that he is able to guard what he has entrusted to Christ until that day? I hope you do. If you believe, as the Scriptures teach, that he is the author and the finisher of our faith, the one who perfects our faith, that we are protected by the power of God through faith for a

¹ Romans 4:18-25.

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salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Do you believe that Jesus is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of his glory blameless with great joy? These are all wonderful truths that we hold dear as Christians and we believe them because God has said them.

But I ask. Do you believe this? Do you believe that sin no longer has dominion over you unless you choose to once again enslave yourself to some besetting sin? Do you believe that if you do that, as the Scriptures teach, you will forfeit blessing in your life and you will even place yourself in the pathway of divine chastening? Do you believe that the triune God inhabits your body, that your body is literally his temple? If you do, does your life reflect such a promise? Do you believe that he hears the prayers of the righteous?

If so, I ask you. Do you have a habit of prayer? Do you believe, as he has promised, that he will never leave you nor forsake you, that he is your rock, your fortress, your refuge, your strength, your deliverer? If you believe that, then do you live in fear? Do you fear man more than God? Do you believe that he will supply all of your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus? If so, then why do you worry?

Do you believe that every good and perfect gift comes from your Father above, that no good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly?

If the answer is, "Yes, I believe that," then why do you murmur and complain?

Do you believe that one day you will be rewarded according to your faithfulness and service? Does that motivate you? Do you believe that he is going to come again and he is going to take you unto himself and you are going to see him face to face and you will worship him forever in the ineffable splendors of heaven? Do you believe that?

If so, do you live in light of such magnificent truths?

You see, dear friends, we either believe in the promises of God or we don't. And isn't it interesting as we go through that little test we can all say, "Well, yes, I really do believe, but sometimes my faith is weak. Sometimes I live as if I don't believe."

And although it only requires a little faith, as Jesus said the size of a mustard seed, just a little faith for a man to be saved, even as that little seed can grow with astonishing power and grow into a great plant, so, too, can the tiny faith of everyone of us grow into something powerful and mighty, because the source of our faith and the object of our faith is God even as the little mustard seed faith that Jesus spoke about. When we have that, Jesus said that nothing will be impossible with God.

May I remind you that faith is a gift from God? It is a work of the Holy Spirit. It is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, something that only he ultimately can produce. And yet in

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ways that are mysterious to us, in ways that we cannot comprehend, he causes us to voluntarily believe, then grow into conformity with Christ.

Indeed, as the Scriptures tell us, we are to his workmanship.

But, dear friend, if you have placed the disposition of your soul in the hands of our merciful God through faith in his Son, then you must trust him with every area of life. You see, to do anything less is hypocrisy. To do anything less would be to impugn the character of God.

I ask you. Have you any reason to be suspicious of God, that somehow he is not quite what he claims to be?

Dear Christian, either trust him or deny him. Either follow him fully or not at all. You see, the Church is filled with cowards and with sluggards who claim allegiance to the king but never don the armor of the saint and never pick up the sword and follow him into battle.

I am too busy. I have got too much going on. Oh, too tired. That is not really my gift. And on and on it goes.

Dear friend, if that is you, please here this in love. You are a disgrace to the King because you dishonor the gospel of grace. The world laughs at your divided loyalty. And I would say to you this morning as Elijah declared to the sons of Israel before he brought down the fire, before God brought down the fire upon the altar there with Baal.

“How long,” he said, “will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.”²

And that is what I would say to you this morning. Do one or the other. Don't vacillate between the Creator God and some idol of your own heart, something that has grabbed a hold of you and that you pursue with all of your life that distracts you from worshipping and serving the one true God. Either serve him or deny him. Do one or the other.

As Joshua said to the sons of Israel, “And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve.”³

And he went on to say, “but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”⁴

Why? Because of his character, because of his mercy, his grace, his love. All of that deserves this kind of faith.

² 1 Kings 18:21.

³ Joshua 24:15.

⁴ Ibid.

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Dear friends, we need men and women of mighty faith, especially today, strong faith lived by strong men who are strong in battle. Strong in the world and will, indeed, grow even stronger with every wound that they suffer for the sake of the King.

Beloved, there are many profound blessings when we truly live by faith. And the apostle Paul has emphasized this over and over in Romans thus far. He has told us in chapter one and verse 17, "The righteous man shall live by faith."⁵

And in chapter four where we have come to today he has proven that God justifies the ungodly not by their works, but by grace, by faith, not by the law.

And Paul has used the example of Abraham to illustrate these wonderful truths. By way of review the apostle now has drawn especially his Jewish audience into his argument knowing full well the kinds of questions they would ask, namely, "Well, how did Abraham receive his righteousness or his inheritance or his posterity?" And the answer all the way through is, "By grace alone through faith alone."

And Paul uses the promise of Abraham's posterity as the final illustration that summarizes this great theme that salvation is by grace through faith. And through the supernatural genius of the inspired Word, he demonstrates that, indeed, God's promises can only be fulfilled by God's power. That is the great theme of our text this morning, not by any human works, not by human flesh.

In this text this morning we will learn many great truths that I believe we can apply to our life, because I, like you, at times struggle with my faith. We must all be honest about this. Here we are going to see the essence of faith and the effect of faith, a very simple outline. But under the heading, "The essence of faith," I am going to give you three elements of faith that emerge from this text.

So first we look at the essence of faith.

Now, again, Paul knew what the Jews would ask.

"How did Abraham receive his posterity?"

And he reminds his readers of the promise that God gave to Abraham. Back up to verse 16.

He says, "For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace."⁶

In other words, it is because of God's sovereign grace that a man believes in God.

⁵ Romans 1:17.

⁶ Romans 4:16.

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“...in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, ‘A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU’) in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.”⁷

Then notice what Paul says about the essence of Abraham's faith in verse 18.

“In hope against hope he believed.”⁸

That is a curious statement. It simply means that he believed against hope. In other words, when humanly speaking it was beyond hope.

He goes on to say, “...in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, ‘SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE.’”⁹

Now let's grasp what Paul is saying here. You will recall back in Genesis 11 where we first learn about Abram that he is one who is called Abram, not Abraham. Abram simply means father of many. And in that text we learn that he marries Sarah and they have no children and they move up north to Haran and they live there about 15 years and they still have no children.

Now imagine what it would be like to come and meet people and say, “Hi, I am father of many.”

“Oh, great. Nice to meet you, father of many. How many kids do you have?”

“Well, I don't have any yet. We haven't had any yet, but we are going to.”

Now mind you, you are an old man already. Imagine the snickers.

And then we learn that God speaks to him later in Genesis chapter 12 verse one. He says:

Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.¹⁰

⁷ Romans 4:16-17.

⁸ Romans 4:18.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Genesis 12:1-3.

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Abraham now is 75 years old and solely on the basis of God's promise he packs up all of his servants, tells his wife Sarah, "Let's go. We are going about 400 miles southwest. I am not real sure where God is taking us, but I believe that he is going to show us progressively."

It is also interesting to note that in Genesis chapter 13 and verse two we read, "Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold."¹¹

So here we have an old man whose name is father of many who has no kids, but who is very wealthy. He would... he lived in the area where there were great trade routes, so he was involved much with merchants between Egypt and all of that would be north and east. He would have traded with many people. He would have developed quite a reputation as this very wealthy merchant. He would have had many servants. And, again, think of all the people that he would meet.

"Hi. I'm Abram, father of many."

"Oh, great. Nice to meet you. By the way, how many do you have?"

"Well, don't have any yet, but they are coming."

Now don't you know that all of these people that would have met him would have said in our Tennessee vernacular, at least to themselves, "Son, you all better get with the program, because you are no spring chicken anymore."

You know that he knew that is what people were thinking. Don't you know all of his servants would have talked behind his back and said, "I wonder if it is him or if it is her that can't produce."

They would have known about the gossip. Can't you just hear it?

"Yeah, you know, he says that his God has promised him that through him he will make a great nation, that he will make his name great."

And other people would say, "You can't be serious. Does he really believe that?"

Well, if that is not bad enough a few more years go by with still no child and in Genesis 15 God appears to him, takes him outside at night and says in verse five, "'Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'"¹²

¹¹ Genesis 13:2.

¹² Genesis 15:5.

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And then that great text in verse six. "Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."¹³

Now I ask you, my friends. On what basis would Abraham believe on the Lord? There is no record that he had ever witnessed any miracle. Why would he believe when he and his wife were well beyond child bearing years? On what basis did he believe in the Lord? And the answer is: On the basis of God's Word.

There is a clue that we see in verse 17. There we read that by faith Abraham believed what God said, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS I HAVE MADE YOU."¹⁴

Isn't that interesting? This is more than just a promise. This was a statement of fact, a certainty that had not yet happened. And has not God spoken to us in similar ways? In Romans 8:30 we read, "Whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified,"¹⁵ past tense. I am not glorified yet, are you? No. But the point is the fact that we will be glorified is so certain it is stated as if it has already happened.

Why would we believe this? On the basis of God's Word, by faith.

Has God not said in Ephesians chapter one and verse three that He has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"?¹⁶

You see, that is a statement of fact even though we have not fully experienced all of that. Do you believe that? If so, on what basis do you believe that? On the basis of the Word of God.

Now I ask you. Is there anything that we can or must do to guarantee the fulfillment of any of the promises that God has made us? The answer is no. We simply believe. Human effort is useless. It all depends on the power of God. And that is the point. What did Abraham contribute to the fulfillment of God's promise concerning an heir through Sarah? What did he contribute? Nothing. He couldn't do anything.

Verse 18 it says, "In hope against hope he believed."¹⁷

Ah, that is what he did. By God's grace he believed. It was beyond the realm of human effort.

Dear friends, the first element of a godly faith is this. Faith believes God when human

¹³ Genesis 15:6.

¹⁴ Romans 4:17.

¹⁵ Romans 8:30.

¹⁶ Ephesians 1:3.

¹⁷ Romans 4:18.

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hope is gone. And why? The reason is because this kind of a faith has a confident certainty in the Word of God. That is where it begins.

What is amazing is when we believe God will accomplish what he has promised when it is beyond any conceivable human possibility. Our faith in the Word of God actually gives us hope, doesn't it? Isn't that an amazing phenomena that occurs? Faith is full of expectations. In fact, I often think of the Christian life as not only as a constant battle, we are constantly at war, but it is a great adventure. It is a great adventure. Think about it. God has promised us that he is going to impute the righteousness of Christ unto all who believe.

Now, what can we do to help accomplish this? There is nothing. That is strictly through the power of God. We simply believe. God has promised to some day come and snatch away his Church, take us unto himself in the rapture of the Church. He has promised that he is going to resume Daniel's 70th week of judgment against Israel known as the great tribulation, the time of judgment that is going to be poured out upon the earth. He is going to fulfill all of his promises to Israel. And what can we do to pull that off? Nothing. We trust him to do what only his power can do.

He has promised to return in power and great glory. He has promised that when he returns that we will come with him and that we will reign on this earth, a renovated earth for 1000 years. He has promised to destroy this heaven and this earth and create a new one, a new heaven and a new earth, a place where the redeemed will live forever in imaginable glory. And we can't do anything to accomplish any of this. But if we have a confident certainty in the Word of God, we have hope.

So the first element of faith is that faith believes God when human hope is gone because it has a confident certainty in the Word of God.

Now, a second element of faith emerges from this text. Notice in verse 19 we have to understand this in context. Notice he says, "And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb."¹⁸

Interesting phrase. "without being coming weak in faith."¹⁹ It gives you the idea that there is a period of time where this could possibly happen, but it doesn't.

Now in this context to become weak in faith means to give up on God, to succumb to doubt and to discouragement.

Woe is me. I just can't take God at his Word anymore. He is just not coming through so I am going to ignore him. I am going to strike out on my own. I am going to take matters

¹⁸ Romans 4:19.

¹⁹ Ibid.

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into my own hands, because, after all, God is not sufficient to meet my needs. Evidently he doesn't understand what I am dealing with.

Perhaps he is indifferent. But whatever it is, I will not trust him. I will not obey him. Instead, I am going to do things my way.

Abraham never did that. Certainly he struggled for understanding. Don't we all at times. In his uncertainty of God's timing and ultimate plan, he foolishly tried to assist God by considering Eleazer his servant, the head of his household to be his potential heir you will recall in Genesis 15. In his impatience and confusion he even sinned by listening to his wife Sarah who had probably had it up to hear with everybody's humiliating remarks. She suggested that he follow the customary procedure of that culture and have a child through a substitute wife, Hagar one of their servants who bore him Ishmael.

But never do we read that Abraham gave up on God. Never do we read that he succumbed to doubt and discouragement, doubting the promises of God and then wallowing in the mire of disappointment. Never do we read that he stepped out on his own.

Now this is truly remarkable when you think about the history of Abraham. Again, remember, his name was first Abram father of many, yet no heir.

So he lives with this embarrassment and ridicule. And I am sure with the ever present doubt and discouragement that is a part of his flesh, the flesh always being the greatest foe of faith. But what is interesting is several years go by and God appears to Abram, father of man again in Genesis 17. And he reaffirms his covenant promises to him and now Abraham is 99 years old, still no heir through Sarah and God says in verse five, "No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I will make you the father of a multitude of nations."²⁰

Now, do you think it was bad being called Abram, what it is like being called Abraham? Can you imagine the reaction of his servants and all of his friends and all of the business associates when they heard the new name? I am sure it went something like this.

"Hey, you are not going to believe this. But, you know, Abram, father of many, the old geezer, you know, the rich guy over there with his old wife Sarah, you are not going to believe this, but he says that his God has spoken to him and says that Ishmael is not the right heir, that he is going to have a son through his wife Sarah. And he says, therefore, God has now changed his name to Abraham, father of many nations. Can you believe that?"

But isn't it interesting? We see that he never becomes weak in faith.

²⁰ Genesis 17:5.

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Can you imagine the humiliation, the embarrassment?

Now it is, "Hi. I am Abraham, father of many nations."

"Oh, really. My, you have got a lot of people here. Are all these your children?"

"Well, no. I have on, Ishmael, but he is not my heir. That is the only one we have right now."

"Oh, ok."

"Yeah, that white haired lady over there, Sarah, my wife, we are going to have a child. God has promised us that."

Now you know when people heard that they are going to walk away and at least say to themselves, "This poor old guy is not tethered to reality. There is a problem here."

But despite all of this, go back to the text. Paul says in verse 18, "In hope against hope he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, 'SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE.'"²¹

Verse 19.

"And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb."²²

Verse 20.

"Yet, with respect to the promise of God [I love this], he did not waver in unbelief."²³

Waver, *diakrinw* (dee-ak-ree'-no) in the original language. It means to stagger. It means to hesitate. It means to doubt. It means to vacillate back and forth between faith and doubt. He didn't do that. But instead look what the text says.

"But he grew strong in faith."²⁴

Now this is amazing, isn't it? What God has promised was utterly impossible humanly speaking, plus he is going through all of the inevitable ridicule and embarrassment, his friends suggesting that he has believed some kind of a lie, that this God that you claim to hear is no god at all. And then his flesh has got to be gnawing at him saying, "All these

²¹ Romans 4:18.

²² Romans 4:19.

²³ Romans 4:20.

²⁴ Ibid.

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years. How long are you going to continue to believe this sham? This is not going to happen. This is a nightmare and it is never going away. Give up on Jehovah. He cannot be trusted.”

But no. We read that he never became weak in faith. He never succumbed to doubt and to discouragement. He never vacillates, believing God one day, but then the next day, no, I am not sure he can be trusted.

But instead he grows strong in faith. How could he possibly do that? And the answer is he had a confident certainty in the attributes of God.

Remember in verse 17 we read Abraham believed God was the one, it says, “who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.”²⁵

You see, his body and Sarah's body were physically dead with respect to being able to produce children. They are 100 years old. But he believed that God was the Creator God. He believed that God was omnipotent, capable of calling into being that which does not exist.

I would add because of this years later when he was asked to sacrifice the heir that God finally gave him, Isaac, he was willing to do that because he fully believed that God would raise him from the dead.

Hebrews chapter 11 and verse nine bears that out.

So, my friends, here is the second principle of a godly faith. Faith triumphs over doubt and discouragement. Faith triumphs over doubt and discouragement. Why? Because it has a confident certainty in the attributes of God.

Think about it. Why trust the Word of God if you don't believe he can accomplish all that he has decreed. That would be rather silly.

Notice in verse 21 he says, “Ad being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.”²⁶

There was no doubt here.

Now, indeed, Abraham had a confident certainty in the attributes of God. In fact, if you go to Genesis 15 and verse two you will read that he addressed him as “Oh, Lord GOD,” ynda (ad-o-noy') hwhy (yah'-weh), Lord, my master, Jehovah. He believed all that God had revealed to him concerning himself, concerning his glorious person, summarized in the name Yahweh, often translated in your Bibles with capital L O R D, what the old

²⁵ Romans 4:17.

²⁶ Romans 4:21.

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theologians would call the ineffable tetragrammaton, the too wondrous to utter from the lips four letters, Yahweh.

In Psalm chapter nine and verse nine David says this.

The LORD [there it is, Yahweh] also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, A stronghold in times of trouble, And those who know Thy name will put their trust in Thee; For Thou, O LORD, hast not forsaken those who seek Thee.²⁷

What an enormous encouragement this is. The key to confident faith that triumphs over doubt and discouragement is knowing his name. Those who know your name and put their trust in that name will have triumph over doubt and discouragement.

You see, superficial understanding of the attributes of God, of the character of God will inevitably result in a weak faith. If you have got an area in your life where you are struggling, I assure that somewhere you doubt some aspect of the attributes of God. You simply refuse to trust his goodness, perhaps his omnipotence, whatever. And therefore you end up putting yourself in a position to fail spiritually.

Do you believe who he says that he is? Let me remind you of some of the attributes of God that we read in Scripture. We read that God is one God in three persons, that he is compassionate, eternal, self existent, faithful and trustworthy, good and gracious, holy, impartial, just, loving, merciful, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, patient, long suffering and forbearing. He is righteous, truthful and unchangeable. He is the sovereign over all of creation who has decreed the end from the beginning. That sounds like the type of God that I can trust, doesn't it, you?

Well, do you believe this to be true? You see, those who treasure these truths will be the ones who possess a faith that will triumph over doubt and discouragement when all the world is laughing at what you believe. When all the world looks at you and thinks you are an absolute idiot, you fall back not only on the Word of God, but on the attributes of God and your faith will not waver.

I have to smile. Have you ever noticed how God loves to orchestrate the impossible in order to accomplish the supernatural? Have you ever noticed he does that? That is precisely what he does with Abraham. I mean, think about it. He makes him all of these promises when he is an old man. And all of these promises are contingent upon an heir. And then he waits until the guy is almost dead to fulfill it.

Why would he do that? Well, it is rather obvious, isn't it? To prove to everyone that the only power that could possibly accomplish the promises of God will be the power of God. Human effort is utterly futile. It is meaningless. And Abraham's entire life is the

²⁷ Psalm 9:9-10.

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perfect illustration of this very thing. Not only with respect to salvation, pointing out first and foremost that a man cannot be justified by anything he does. It is all by the power of God, but also in every other promise that he made to Abraham.

God wants the whole world to know that he is God and that we are not.

So he loves to orchestrate the impossible to accomplish the supernatural.

This leads us to a third element of the essence of godly faith that emerges from this illustration. Not only does faith believe or not only does faith believe God when human hope is gone because of the confident certainty of the Word of God and faith triumphs over doubt and discouragement because of the confident certainty in the attributes of God, but thirdly, faith endures for the glory of God. How so? Because it has a confident certainty in the purposes of God.

And ultimately God's purpose is to glorify himself.

Notice verse 20.

Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith [I love this], giving glory to God and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.²⁸

For what purpose? What purpose would God do these things?

To bring glory to himself.

But please understand this, dear friends. We have faith in God as Abraham had faith in God not to somehow bring glory to us because, after all, as Paul's impeccable logic has proven here, Abraham was unable to do anything to accomplish what God had promised. But rather Abraham had faith in God and we have faith in God. We believe in him so that God can receive the glory and we are confident because of his Word and because of his attributes that the promises that he has made to ultimately glorify himself will be accomplished.

So, indeed, faith endures for the glory of God because it has this confident certainty in the purposes of God, purposes that he knew had been decreed to glorify his Lord Jehovah.

Think about God's promises to Abraham. Remember he promised him a seed referring to the Messiah Christ who would one day be both the Redeemer and King who would come from the loins of Abraham through Isaac and later through Jacob and so forth. And we know that Abraham only saw this according to Hebrews 11:13, from a distance. He never saw the fruition of the promise of the coming Messiah. He just saw it from a distance

²⁸ Romans 4:20-21.

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meaning that he saw in the seedling of Isaac what would one day culminate in Christ. But he never saw Christ in his lifetime. He has certainly seen him now.

But we can look back and we can see that the Redeemer has come, but we still wait for the King, right? We haven't seen the king yet. We wait for the king of glory. And, like Abraham, we have faith that God will accomplish this by his power because we have a confident certainty in the Word of God, in the attributes of God and the purposes of God which is ultimately to glorify himself.

Secondly, God promised Abraham a land, a specific territory that would be set apart by God for his covenant people where he would one day dwell with them in a holy and an intimate union. And Abraham believed God for this. But do you know what? He never saw it in his lifetime. He only owned a small little portion for a burial plot. He lived a nomadic lifestyle.

In fact, it was 700 years after God first promised Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land that Joshua even began the conquest of Canaan. And it took 100 years before that was completed. And like Abraham, we believe that God will do precisely as he has promised. And we believe that by faith.

Today we look at Israel. We see them as God sees them, God's beloved enemy. They don't believe in him as they should. They are dwelling in a small portion of their land. But yet on the basis of his Word we know that one day he is going to reconcile them unto himself.

Think about it. Tiny little Israel surrounded by literally millions of people who want their head on a platter. Remember, God loves to orchestrate the impossible to accomplish the supernatural that he might be glorified.

Today Israel is surrounded by overwhelming force that seeks their total annihilation. And do you know what? This is just the way God likes it. Why? To test our faith, to prove himself powerful, orchestrating a scenario where there is absolutely no possible means of deliverance from human hands and then, bam, God delivers them in the moment of their peril and glorifies himself. Prophecies abound to speak to this. I will remind you but of one.

Remember in Ezekiel 38 God describes the Arab and Islamic forces that will one day come down upon Israel. In fact, he is going to bring them down on Israel even though they think they are doing it voluntarily. And in Ezekiel 39 we read this beginning at verse two. God says through his prophet:

And I shall turn you around, drive you on, take you up from the remotest parts of the north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel. And I shall strike your bow from your left hand, and dash down your arrows from your right hand. You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and

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all your troops, and the peoples who are with you; I shall give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field. You will fall on the open field; for it is I who have spoken," declares the Lord GOD. And I shall send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am the LORD. And My holy name I shall make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I shall not let My holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.

"Behold, it is coming and it shall be done," declares the Lord GOD. "That is the day of which I have spoken."²⁹

Well, it hasn't happened yet, but it will. And when absolutely all hope seems lost and I believe personally even though we can't say with certainty from Scripture that part of that hope being lost will be America turning her back on Israel which is already beginning to happen. When all hope seems lost that is exactly when God will do what he has promised.

One day what God promised Abraham regarding the land will come to pass even as he has said and all the nations will know that he is the Lord. God has also promised Abraham a nation where the glory of God's grace would be put on display. He promised him that he would have descendants as innumerable as the stars in the heaven.

You know, Abraham never saw that. But he believed it. And today we see a little seed of this in Israel awaiting the Messiah. He promised him divine blessing and protection in Genesis 12:3.

"And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."³⁰

Well, Abraham never saw the fulfillment of this. But his faith never became weak. He never doubted God. he never wavered. He never vacillated back and forth. It kept growing stronger because God honoring faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen.

You see, dear Christian, and don't miss this. Faith believes God when human hope is all gone because there is a confident certainty in the Word of God. Faith triumphs over doubt and discouragement because it has a confident certainty in the attributes of God and faith endures for the glory of God because it has a confident certainty in the purposes of God. That is the essence of faith.

And, finally, Paul closes this section with what can call the effect of faith, verse 22.

Therefore also IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

²⁹ Ezekiel 39:2-8.

³⁰ Genesis 12:3.

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Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who [catch this] believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.³¹

I ask you, my friend, do you believe in the resurrected Christ?

Verse 25.

“ He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.”³²

Do you see? If you do not believe you cannot be justified. You will never be declared righteous. You will never have the righteousness of Christ imputed to you. God will see you in your sin and you will perish in your iniquities and you will endure eternal condemnation.

Oh, come on. I am not that bad of a person.

My friend, you are exceedingly worse than you can ever imagine when compared to the holy God. And the miracle of justification is a promise that can only be fulfilled by the power of God. Your human effort is utterly meaningless.

Dear Christian, I close with this question. Is there some area in your life where you are not trusting God, some issue where, perhaps, you have called God's character into question or you are suspicious of him? Won't you repent of this today?

What a mockery this is to the Lord our God. Won't you take the truths that you have heard today, apply them to your life because this is what it means to grow in the grace and the knowledge of Christ. Ask the Spirit of God to give you a confident certainty in the Word of God and in the attributes of God and in the promises of God and watch what might be a little faith today grow stronger into a mighty oak of faith that will give God great glory and bring you great joy.

Let's pray together.

Father, we pray that by the power of your Spirit these things would be accomplished. We give you all the glory in Jesus' name. Amen.

³¹ Romans 4:22-24.

³² Romans 4:25.

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