

**Title: The Faith of Abraham**

**Text: Romans 4:13-25**

**NOTE TO LEADERS:** This is an abridged version of Pastor Dan's sermon notes for your own personal study, with the addition of possible discussion questions to use in your life group meeting. Please review these notes well in advance of your meeting, add your own questions and direct the discussion as you see fit. The key to a good discussion is to keep it simple, to ask several "open-ended" questions and to give opportunity for everyone in the group to contribute.

**Introduction:** Today we see the glorious blessing of faith in God and its power to save. Paul focuses on the faith of the "Father of Faith" as an example for all New Covenant believers who trust in the promises of God.

Last three weeks' key scriptures:

**Romans 1:17** *The just shall live by faith*

**Romans 2:4** *The goodness of God leads to repentance*

**Romans 3:24** *Being justified freely by His grace*

**POSSIBLE GROUP ACTIVITY:** Ask group members to recall the key "memory" verses from the last three weeks. You may want to encourage your group to memorize the key verses from this series from week-to-week and to offer a prize for those who can recall all of these (including chapter/verse references) at the end of the series.

**Text: Romans 4:3, 9, 13-25** - Ask a group member to read the text, read the text in unison as a group or divide the text up between several readers. Since there is much "meat" in this text, you may want to read it through twice.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- Let's dig into this passage. What words, phrases and observations most stand out to you? Let's list these. *Note: Give the group some time to review the passage. Ask someone to be a scribe and to list these on a large sheet of paper or flip chart. Don't discuss these yet. Just list them.*
- As we look at these things, what impacts you and why?
- What do you think Paul's main point is in these verses?

**I. Summary of Paul's main point.** Abraham is an OT example of being saved by faith rather than by works. 430 years before the Law was given to Moses (Gal 3:17), Abraham gained right standing with God through faith. Abraham was pardoned by God in much the same way we are today, he *believed* God and "*it was reckoned to him for righteousness*". God saw his faith and it was counted as the same as righteousness.

**II. Faith and Righteousness**

- **Romans 4:3** *And Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness*
- **Romans 4:9** *Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness*
- **Romans 4:13** *For the promise was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.*
- **Romans 4:22** *faith... "was counted to him as righteousness"*

**III. DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What specifically did Abraham believe that was counted to him as righteousness? Review Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 15:1-6 (referenced in Rom. 4:22). See also Hebrews 11:8-12 for other examples of Abraham's faith.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** It is significant to note that it took 25 years from the time the promise of a son was given to Abraham to the time it was fulfilled in the birth of Isaac! Abraham's faith was immediately credited to him as righteousness when he first believed God, but there was also a persevering dimension of his faith.

- What lessons can we learn about faith from Abraham's example here?
- Can anyone share a personal example of how you persevered in faith and saw the promise of God fulfilled in your life?
- What lessons did you learn along the way?
- What words of wisdom or encouragement can you offer to others who may be waiting on the fulfillment of God's promise in an area of their lives?

#### IV. Abraham models the kind of faith that pleases God

**Romans 4:12** says we are to *'follow in the footsteps of the faith of Abraham'*. Of course it primarily means that we are to understand salvation as a work of grace through faith but it also teaches us the kind of the faith that moves the heart and hand of God.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What are some of the other characteristics of faith that we see in Abraham's example of faith?

#### V. ABRAHAM'S FAITH

##### A. FAITH WORKS LIKE GRACE: Romans 4:16

He wants us to receive His promises through grace by simply believing in Him

- a. Faith made Abraham righteous before Christ.
- b. Faith made Abraham a father before he had a son.
- c. Faith made Abraham an heir while he yet an alien in the land of promise (Heb 11:8-10)

##### B. FAITH IS IN GOD NOT IN FAITH: Romans 4:17

Abraham's faith sprang out of his trust of God's ability to do whatever He promised.

1. God's resurrection power - "*God, who gives life to the dead.*"
2. God's creative power - "*and calls into being that which does not exist.*"

##### C. FAITH OVERCOMES HOPELESSNESS: Romans 4:18-19

1. His faith grew strong in spite of the situation's hopelessness (v. 18).
2. His faith grew strong in spite of the negative evidence (v. 19).

**Keep away the vultures of unbelief.** In **Genesis 15**, to confirm His promise, a sacrifice was made with Abraham and the Lord passed through the two bloody halves. In **Gen 15:11**, we are told that *‘the vultures came down’* to eat the sacrifice so Abraham had to *‘drive them away’*.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- Share a time when you struggled with hopelessness and how you overcame it?
- What are some ways you have learned to drive away “the vultures of unbelief” in your own life that might be helpful to the rest of us?

**D. FAITH GROWS STRONGER WORSHIPING GOD: Romans 4:20**

This imperfect man did love God and wanted to give Him glory in everything – even to the point of sacrificing his only son, if necessary. **When you continue to trust God – in spite of everything – you are giving God glory.**

**E. FAITH CAN BE STRENGTHENED: Romans 4:21**

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What are some other ways we can strengthen our faith?

**F. FAITH MAKES RIGHTEOUS: Romans 4:22**

**→ True faith always has a miraculous payoff. It gives favor with God. It obtains promises. It overcomes adversity. It contends, expands, resists and grows.**

**FINAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- Abraham’s faith was the *kind (or quality)* of faith that pleased God, but was Abraham’s faith a “perfect” faith? Explain. Can anyone think of examples in which Abraham’s faith faltered along the way?
- How do we reconcile the fact that Abraham’s faith was both “imperfect” *and* pleasing to God at the same time?
- How would explain this seeming contradiction to someone grappling to understand what it means to put their faith in God?
- What encouragement do you find in these contrasting aspects of Abraham’s faith walk?

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:**

- Share one “take-away” for you personally from the example of Abraham and how you will apply it in your life?
- Share one promise you are believing God for or one area in which your faith needs to be strengthened tonight? Note: Depending on the size of your group you may want to do this in smaller groups of 3-4.
- Pray for each other in these areas.