

The Faith Of Abraham

Romans 4:17-25

Pastor John Miller

I want to read the whole text. I want you to get it in its flow. Follow with me beginning in verse 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.

Occasionally, around the house, I like to grab The Guinness Book of World Records and just look at the trivia in there; the largest person that ever lived, the tallest man, who can eat the most hot dogs, you know, all the different things that you find in The Guinness Book of World Records. There is a mistake that I discovered in the Guinness Book of World Records. It recorded that in October, 1956, at the age of 57, a woman gave birth to a child. She is recorded as being the oldest mother in history. The oldest mother ever to give birth to a child, 1956. The truth is, tonight in our text, we're going to learn about the oldest mother in history who ever gave birth to a child. That mother being Sarah.

Buckle your seatbelts, Sarah was 90 years old. All things are possible with God, right? God can do anything! What faith it took for Abraham and for Sarah to believe the promise God made to them would be fulfilled in that son whom we call Isaac. His name means laughter because when God made the promise, they laughed, thinking how crazy that we at our age, (we're going to get there in a minute) Abraham was 100, Sarah was 90, had a child. It just makes me want to sit down and rest for a minute. When I think about it, it makes me tired. Paul is using this Old Testament story as a masterful argument for justification by faith. Father Abraham, Paul shows, was justified by faith. I want you to back up to chapter 3, verse 28. Paul says, "Therefore we conclude..." now this is the conclusion of his section on how God saves sinners. He saves them by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Notice verse 28, "...that a man is justified..." declared righteous, "...by faith without the deeds of the law." Simply stated in chapter 4, Paul illustrates that point. A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Where do we see that illustrated? In Abraham. The way God saved Abraham was by faith, so it really sets the tone for how God saves sinners throughout the Bible. How does God save sinners? By faith and faith alone.

In chapter 4, verses 1-16, last week we saw three things. God saves sinners by faith not works, illustrated in verses 1-8 in the life of Abraham. Secondly, God saves sinners by faith not rites or rituals. In Abraham's case, it was circumcision, verses 9-12. Thirdly, God saves sinners by faith not the law, verses 13-16. So Abraham was saved by faith not works, by faith not rites or rituals, and by faith not law. We're going to add one more to that list tonight. Fourthly, it would be Abraham was saved by faith in God's promise, verses 17-25. We are going to see in this text the true nature of faith. Let me say a few things about faith before we unpack these verses. Many people are confused when it comes to understanding faith. First of all, some people think that it is nothing but a mental ascent to some facts that you believe are true. We believe God is real, and we have this mental ascent to those facts. You might believe the Bible is real. You might believe in Jesus Christ, that He really walked on earth. Those are all mentally believing a set of facts. That's not Biblical faith. Biblical faith contains that element, but it goes farther and it involves a commitment of one's self.

Another popular view about faith is that it is a feeling, a confidence. Many times, I've seen parents being interviewed on the news. Maybe their child had gone missing. I remember one distraught mother on the news. Her child had gone missing, and she was being interviewed. She was saying, "I have faith my child will return." Now, my question was...I mean my heart went out to her, and I understood her situation. My question was, faith in who? Faith in what? Is faith just a feeling like, "I know she'll come back, I know she'll come back. I know I'll get my child. I know it's going to happen." We just kind of psyche ourself up that, "I just have to believe positively." Is it a positive mental attitude where we just think something we want to be true, and we just wish it to be true? That's not Biblical faith. Biblical faith is not just a feeling or wishing something to be true.

Others think that faith is actually a type of self deception, that it is believing what you know to be not true. This is how a lot of people look at Christianity from the outside. A lot of people that are atheist, agnostic or rationalist look at Christians and go, "They just have faith, and they just make up what they want to believe. They just have this faith that there's a God, that there's an afterlife, and faith that God will save them from their sins." It's just kind of like a fairytale faith. We just wishfully hope and believe that God is real, and somehow it's all going to come to pass. None of these are truly Biblical views of faith.

Biblical faith is trust. Biblical faith is trustworthy. It is putting your faith in a trustworthy God and His trustworthy Word. We are going to see tonight that Biblical faith has an object. That object is God. Biblical faith understands the obstacles. It doesn't dismiss the idea that this is impossible or this is going to be difficult or this is going to be hard. It knows the obstacles, and Biblical faith has an outcome as well that results in salvation, true holiness and godly living. We are going to break it down into those categories.

Someone said, "Faith is not believing in spite of evidence, it's obeying in spite of the consequence." It's not believing in spite of evidence, it's obeying God and trusting God in spite of the consequences. Now, as we consider together the example of Abraham's faith, I want you to note these four facts about his faith. First of all, the object of Abraham's faith is seen in verse

17. He starts again with a quote from the Old Testament. He's quoting from the Old Testament book of Genesis 17. He says, "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth..." or makes alive, "...the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." The most important part of your faith is not its intensity, it's its object. Now, there is teaching today, even in the church, that has an overemphasis on faith to the point where it becomes an aberrant and a wrong teaching on faith. They view faith itself as a force, and they view the intensity of your faith as having power, that there is power in faith. What they are basically teaching, even though maybe they are ignorant of this fact, is faith in faith. They are teaching faith in faith. The Bible says, "Have faith in God." Now, let me illustrate what I mean.

A lot of people will go out on a frozen lake covered with ice, in faith. I'm born and raised in Southern California, so I don't do ice, you know. I don't do snow. My mother was born and raised in Wisconsin, and she tells me all the stories about the cold and iceskating to school, all that kind of stuff. I can't relate to that, but when I see pictures of people who have fallen through the ice or they drive their car out on the ice and it crashes through, I'm thinking, "Man, before you walk out on that ice, you better make real sure that it is thick enough to hold you." Amen? That's scary. So, they go out and think, "Hey, this is gonna be great! We're going to go ice fishing or drive our car out on the lake," or whatever. So their faith is in the ice, but if the ice is thin, it can break and they can go under, right? Now, the opposite could happen. You could have somebody with very thick ice, but with fear and trepidation they are, "I don't know if I should..." maybe they'll lay out flat so that they can distribute their weight evenly as they crawl over the ice. Picture someone crawling across the lake on his stomach and then some guy just comes walking by looking at him like, "What's your problem, you know, the ice is plenty thick enough," or a car goes whizzing by or something like that. It's like, "Dude, you can get up and walk." So what happens is, if God is the object of your faith, then you have a sure thing. You have a sure foundation. A little faith can save you because it's in a big God. It's not the amount of faith that takes your soul to heaven, it's the object of your faith.

I said a couple of weeks ago that whatever you put your faith in, you get what that can do. If you put your faith in money, you get what money can do. If you put your faith in man, you get what man can do. If you put your faith in government, you get pretty much nothing. If you put your faith in religion, you get what religion can do. If you put your faith in God, you get what God can do. And, what can God do? All things. All things are possible. It's not the intensity of your faith, or the amount of your faith, it's the object of your faith. This is why, again, so many Christians go through life and they lack assurance, they lack joy, they lack peace, they're troubled or they're distraught because they aren't focusing on God and resting in Him in faith. It's like walking across ice that is plenty thick enough to hold your weight, but they are not enjoying their ice fishing or ice skating because they are fearful and afraid when all the time God is able and we can trust Him. He is trustworthy. Biblical faith is trust in a trustworthy God that makes promises that are sure and we can believe them.

Someone once said, "A little faith will take your soul to heaven, but a lot of faith will bring heaven to your soul." So having said that a little faith in the big God will take you to heaven, if

you want to enjoy heaven now here on earth, it takes a greater faith in God, understanding who He is and resting in Him and resting in His promises. So, if you're troubled tonight, it could be that you need to grow in your understanding of who God is, and you need to focus not on yourself or your circumstances, but you need to focus on God. The question, what was the object of Abraham's faith (verse 17), was answered. It was God and His promises. Now, "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,)" God said that Sarah would bear a child. Abraham got a little impatient. When we talk about Abraham being an example of faith, his faith wavered at times and it wasn't always perfect. Sarah said, "Take Hagar my handmaid and raise up a child through her and we'll raise it as my own." God said, "No, no, no, no, no, no. Ishmael is not the promised son. Sarah is still going to bear a child, and he is going to be from your own loins. That's going to be the son of promise, and through him all the nations of the world will be blessed." This is a very important historic event because it would be through Isaac that the Messiah would come, the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. This is a very special son, a very important promise, and God made that to Abraham. Sarah laughed, and the Angel said, "Why are you laughing?" She got a little fearful and freaked out. The Angel said to her, "You will have a son. A year from now, about this time, you are going to have a son, and you're going to name him Isaac because you laughed." His name is going to be laughter. Every time you look at him you're going to remember that you laughed about that kid. Wouldn't it be funny if your name was laughter? Every time somebody looked at you they started laughing? Isaac.

In Genesis 17:5, God made this promise, "I have made thee a father of many nations." Think about that. "I've made thee a father of many nations," God told Abraham. His name was first Abram, by the way, which means "high father." He is in his seventies, going into his eighties, his name is Abram, "high father," and he had no kids. Can you imagine how embarrassing that would be? "Hey! What's your name?" "Abram." "Oh, you must have a lot of kids." "No. I don't have any kids." Then it's changed to Abraham, which is even worse. It means, "father of a multitude" or "father of a nation." Can you imagine, you know, he's in his 90s, "Hi, what's your name?" "Abraham." "Wow, you must have a lot of kids." "Well, really, actually I don't have any... but I'm going to." "Sure you are, old man." Amazing how God made this promise at this point in time in Abraham's life.

Abraham's faith was in the promise that God made, verse 17. "...he believed...", that is, "... God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." I believe that our focus and the object of our faith needs to be God. Again, tonight if you're here and you've got your eyes on yourself, you've got your eyes on your circumstances, you've got your eyes on your checkbook, you've got your eyes on your bank account, you've got your eyes on your husband, you've got your eyes on your wife or your kids, take them off those things and look to Jesus. Amen? Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow faintly dim, in the light of His glory and grace. Focus on the object of your faith being God. And what kind of God did Abraham put his faith in? That's important to know. 1. The God who gives life to the dead. The God with resurrection power. Think about that. Have you ever heard the phrase, "Where there's life, there's hope?" That's not true when God's in the picture. Whenever God's in the picture, there is always hope. And with God, even in death there is hope. Amen? Because God can raise even the dead. God has life in Himself

to be able to quicken and to raise even the dead. Now, this is a reference to Sarah's womb and to Abraham. They were both well beyond the point in time in their life of childbearing. Yet, God can take that which was dead and He can quicken it, and He can give it life. So, the focus wasn't on the deadness of Sarah's womb or Abraham's impotence, and his inability to have children, the focus was on the God of resurrection power. 2. He is the God of creation power. He calls those things that are not as though they were. There are two ways to interpret that statement. One way is that God can speak about something before it happens as though it has already happened, because God knows it's going to happen. You got that? When you read Romans 8, God calls you, He justifies you, and the Bible says He's glorified you. God looks at you as already glorified. In God's economy, it's a done deal.

The other way to view that, and some modern translations, because in more recent times we found more manuscript evidence, interpret that where it says, "Abraham considered his own body now dead...", the word "not" is not put into that statement there. It says, "...he considered not his body as dead..." or that God, who calls those things that are not as though they were, involves God's, what is called fiat, or His ability to speak things into existence that do not exist. When God created the universe, there were no tools for God to use to assemble. God just spoke matter into existence. God spoke light into existence. God spoke matter into existence because God has creative power. He can do that. We can't do that because we are not divine, but God can. The idea in that is that God speaks, and that which does not exist does exist. So, both are true. God can speak about things before they happen because He knows they are going to happen in God's economy, in God's eternity they already happened; and God can speak things that haven't happened because God knows they are going to happen. Now, when Sarah laughed because she was told she was going to have a child, the Angel actually said to her in Genesis 18:14, "Is any thing too hard for the LORD?" What's the answer to that? So why are you freaking out? You think, "I'll never find someone to marry, especially in this church. There isn't anything to look for." I remember one time in my former church, we were advertising a single's fellowship, and we had a picture of a group that we just got off the internet, you know. When you get something off the internet, everyone is really cool looking in the picture, and we threw it up on the screen. I had all these singles come up to me after church, "Do they go to that fellowship? I've never seen them in our church. What service do they come to?" I said, "Look, cool your jets! It was just a picture off the internet. Nobody but ugly folk in this church, but you still need to come to fellowship." Sometimes we look around and we think, "I'm never going to get a job. I'm never going to get married. I'm never going to have children. God is never going to heal me. God is never going to answer my prayers." We need to have faith in God and trust that what He promises, God can perform.

We has human beings can make a promise, but we don't know it's going to rain. I didn't know the car was going to blow up. I didn't know I was going to get sick. "But, you promised!" Remember when your kids were little? You said, "We're going to have a picnic on Saturday." Then, it rains or you get sick or the car breaks down. You say, "Kids, we can't go." "But you promised!" Right? "I know I promised. I didn't realize the car was going to blow up in the garage and burn down the house." "But you promised!" You see, God knows everything, and God's in control of everything, so whatever God promises, He's able to perform. Nothing can

thwart His promises, so we need to focus on the promises of God—the God who can resurrect the dead, He has resurrection power, and the God who can call those things that are not as though they were.

We move from the object of our faith being the all-powerful, giver of life God to, secondly, the obstacles to Abraham's faith. This is kind of the heart of the passage, verses 18-20. It says, "Who against hope believed in hope..." that means that Abraham looked at his wife and said, "No way." He looked at himself and said, "Ain't gonna happen." Yet, he still had hope, "...that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken..." there's the promise, there's the Word of God. Our faith is in God's Word and in His promises, "...which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead..." that's the reference I made a few moments ago, "...he considered not his own body dead..." or he considered his body dead, "...when he was about an hundred years old..." and he considered also, "...neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb." He didn't focus on his body being dead. Now, it doesn't mean that Abraham didn't know and understand that he was beyond the childbearing age or that Sarah was beyond the childbearing age, it just means that that isn't what he focused on. He didn't allow the human limitations to hinder his faith in believing God and His promises.

Now, whenever we are called to exercise faith, like Abraham was, there will be obstacles. Whenever God calls you to take a step of faith or to exercise faith, there will be obstacles. The faith that cannot be tested, cannot be trusted. The New Living Translation renders verse 18, "Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations." This is where some would say that faith is an unreasonable, irrational synonym for superstition. Abraham knew his body was dead. Abraham knew that Sarah's body was dead, figuratively speaking couldn't produce children, yet he just superstitiously irrationally wanted to believe that. No. There was a rationale, now please listen to me very carefully, there was a rationale, a reason in Abraham's faith. Do you know what the reason was? God. God's trustworthiness. God's ability. God's reliability. So, when people say, "Oh, you can't just trust in God." "Why not?" When I counsel people, 99.9% of the time I end up just saying, "You know, you need to trust God." "Well, can't we fix it? Can't you just do something to fix it?"

People bring to me their teenagers when they're all messed up. "I thought maybe you could fix 'em in an hour, send 'em home perfect." An hour with Pastor John and they'll be perfect. You know, you've taken 16 years to mess them up, and you want me to fix them in an hour? Trust God. Most of the problems people come to me with, and I'm not saying don't come to me, some of you are saying, "Ok. I won't talk to you ever again." It's just, what can you do? You have to trust God. "Well, come on, come on, give me something to do." Trust God. Like that's the worst thing that can happen. "Oh, my gosh, I can't believe it! Pastor said we just should trust God. I just think that there's something we can do." Why? God's not trustworthy? "Well, I don't know. God's kind of unreliable. I don't know if we can really trust Him." I believe that God is trustworthy. Faith is not blind, it sees all the obstacles. What were the obstacles? Verse 19, his body and Sarah's body. That's a big obstacle. Abraham didn't say, "Well, God, You made a

promise, but have You seen my wife? God, You made a promise, but do You know how old I am? I just think You need to know this. I'm like 100, so I don't think this can happen." There are always going to be obstacles.

What are the obstacle to your faith right now? Marriage problems? Cancer? Sickness? Loss of a job? Maybe, lack of education? I don't know. What problems are keeping you, right now, from trusting God? What is bigger than God? What is it that God can't do? What is it God can't handle? What is it God's not in control of? Why are we freaking out? Do you know that Jesus promised in Matthew 6 that if your Father feeds birds, He's going to feed you? I was watching a hawk just go at a big lizard today, just tearing at this big lizard out in the front yard. The big, slimy stuff, you know. It had this big long stuff in his beak, and it ate it all up. It's like, "Awesome!" I wouldn't eat it, but have at it Mr. Hawk. Do you know that God provides for the birds. He creates rodents and lizards, right? God provides for them. Do you know that you are more important than many sparrows, hawks or birds? God provides for them, He provides for you. Why are we freaking out? Because we are looking at the obstacles, and Satan is quick to remind you. "There's no way! You're too old! There's no way! You don't have enough money! There's no way, it's just too bad! There's no way it's going to work out, their hearts are just too hard!" Satan is always there to remind you of the size of the obstacles, and what we ought to focus on is our objective God, our powerful God, our resurrected God.

Abraham's faith was based on the bare promises, verse 20, of God and nothing else whatsoever. He couldn't put hope in his body, his wife's or his, or circumstances. His faith was, in spite of strong circumstances to the contrary. There are going to be obstacles to your faith, but you need to gain God as the object of your faith and realize God is bigger than your obstacles. That is one of the benefits of having walked with God for some time and having grown in your knowledge of the Word, you come to have a big God. J. B. Phillips wrote a book years ago, *Your God is Too Small*. I want to ask everyone of you that are here tonight as Christians, how big is your God? How big is your God? Many times our God is too small. He can't answer prayer. He can't deal with our problems. He can't provide. He can't guide. He doesn't have an answer to our problems, and our God is just too small. Many times we allow the obstacles to keep us from trusting in Him. Abraham did not do that. He put his faith in God in spite of the deadness of Sarah's womb or of his dead body. He trusted in God.

Thirdly, I want to point out the objectives of Abraham's faith. This is so important as you come to the conclusion of this chapter. What does Biblical faith produce in the life of a believer? First, it makes us strong. I want you to look at verse 20, at the end of that verse. "He staggered not at the promise of God..." now that phrase "staggered" means to be divided. It reminds me of James 1 where it says that if any of you lack faith, you can't expect God to answer your prayers, and you shouldn't stagger or waver at the promises of God. So, don't be divided but have a single mind and single heart focused on God. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Notice that statement, "was strong in faith, giving glory to God." I believe that as Christians, if God becomes the object of our faith and we focus on God, not the obstacles, and we believe that God is able, and what God has promised He is able to perform, that we will become stronger in our walk and our

relationship with God. Read Hebrews 11 about all the great exploits that men and women accomplished through faith. They, "...subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions..." clearly a reference to Daniel in the lion's den. Daniel gets thrown into a lion's den. Can you imagine that? You're talking freak out time, right? The dude is going to be thrown into a lion's den, and in the morning he was perfectly fine. Do you know how Daniel conquered that lion's den and how you can conquer your lion? Faith in God, faith and trust in God. He was thrown into the lion's den, and God protected and took care of him. "...Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again." Then it says, Hebrews 11:35, "...others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mocking and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted..." so faith doesn't save us from any trials and testings of life, "...of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise." I'm not trying to say tonight that if you have faith, you'll never have any problems, but I am saying that you can conquer and be victorious in your problems through faith. It'll make you stronger, like Abraham, strong in faith.

The second benefit is in verse 20. It will bring glory to God, "...but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Unbelief dishonors God. Let me be real practical tonight, and I know because I've struggled with it. I know that we all do. Sometimes when you're a Christian, and you are worried, fretting and fearful, or you're discouraged or depressed, and it can be traced back to a lack of faith and trust in God, it dishonors God. If you met a little 5-year-old, and they were freaking out and worried and you say, "What's the matter?" "I don't know if my parents love me. I don't know if they are going to feed me. I don't know if they are going to provide for me." How would that reflect upon their parents? How would you feel if you found out your 5-year-old was in the Sunday school class telling the teacher that you never fed him or took care of him or he was worried to go home because he wasn't sure that they could pay the mortgage this month. Now, I know that sometimes happens, but that's a reflection many times on the parent. I believe that it reflects on God when we lack faith and we don't trust Him. Has He ever given us any reason not to trust Him? Has He ever not did what He had promised? Has He ever failed us? Has He ever let us fall? Has He ever abandoned us? Has He ever let us go? No. God is trustworthy, and we can trust Him. It glorifies God when we do that. Unbelief robs God of glory. Anyone can sing in the sunshine. Isn't it funny when things are really going good—we just got a raise, the car is running, everything is going smoothly—we're praising the Lord. "I'm just praising God! God is just awesome!" Then something goes wrong, "Awww, man. I don't know what's going on? God doesn't love me anymore." Did God just change? No. God is still on the throne. God still loves you. God still has a plan. Faith grows us, makes us strong and glorifies God.

Thirdly, faith also grounds us. In verse 21, it uses the phrase, "...fully persuaded..." he was fully persuaded, he was grounded in his faith. Again, I believe that we grow in faith by

understanding God in His Word. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. So, the more you know God's Word, the more you meditate on God's Word, the more you believe and trust in God's Word, and the better you get to know God in His Word, the more you'll grow in faith. A moment ago I said, "A little faith will take your soul to heaven, but a lot of faith will bring heaven to your soul." You can go through your Christian life biting your fingernails, freaking out, worrying. You're going to go to heaven. It's a done deal, but you can enjoy the ride or not. One time, I saw a lady freaking out on an airplane. She was right in front of me. She was screaming and yelling and shaking the seats in a panic. At the same time she was freaking out, standing in the aisle was a little 5-year-old boy with a big cowboy hat eating a cookie watching her. He was just standing in the aisle watching this poor lady freak out. The plane landed, we all got off safely. We got to our destination and I thought, how like the Christian life that is. You know, some Christians freak out the whole way to heaven, "Aaagh!" Other Christians eat their cookie and enjoy their Christian life. They just kind of, "You know, God is good." "Aren't you freaking out?" "Yeah, I see the problem. I realize that Sarah's womb is dead. I realize how old I am, but you know my focus is on God. I don't let the obstacles keep me from trusting a trustworthy God." I believe that God is able, "...being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." You can leave church tonight with absolute peace that God is in control of your life. The context here is all about salvation, what is real saving faith. It grounds us, it glorifies God.

Lastly, in verse 22, it brings to us righteousness. This is the thrust of the passage. This is one of the greatest verses in the Bible about justification by faith. "And therefore it was imputed to him..." that is Abraham, "...for righteousness." That is, his faith that God was able to perform the promise that He made. Faith in God and the promise that He made meant that God then imputed to Abraham, verse 22, righteousness. This is saving faith. This is the faith that saves. This is a repeated word in this chapter of Romans. It is used in verse 22, "imputed," verse 23, "imputed," back in verse 3 (we got it last Wednesday), "counted." It is used in verse 5, "counted," and in verse 9, "reckon." It is the same Greek word. It is the doctrine of imputation. It's a banking term, a financial term. Remember our books are empty of any money and God deposits it in our account. He takes the righteousness of Christ and He imputes it to us. He gives it to us. Do you know what this means? It means that you are actually, literally in God's eyes, as righteous as Jesus Christ. It isn't make believe. It isn't pretend. God doesn't just pretend that you are as righteous as Christ. He takes your sin and nailed it to the cross. It was paid for at the cross. He takes Christ's righteousness and He gives it to you. You are as righteous as Jesus Christ. That's called imputation. So, if we are fearful and weak and anxious, we need to trust God, believe God. He will make us strong. He will glorify Himself. He will ground us, and He will impute to us His righteousness and that's salvation.

The conclusion is verses 23-25. This is the application of the matter. Basically, the application is that just like Abraham had faith in God alone, and believed God and His promises and was declared righteous, so we are as well. In verse 23 it says, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him," in other words, when God said to Abraham in the Old Testament that I give you righteousness, you're going to be the father of many nations. He believed the promise, and God gave him righteousness. It wasn't just for Abraham, it was for us

also. Verse 24, "But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed..." that's you and me, believers from this time, "...if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." So, what do we have to do? We believe in God that raised up Jesus from the dead. Then notice the statement of the gospel, verse 25, "Who was delivered for our offenses..." that is, Jesus was crucified for our sins, "...and was raised again for our justification..." or our righteousness. You have the crucifixion of Jesus Christ paying for our sins, and you have the resurrection of Jesus Christ where we are declared righteous. Now, when Jesus died, we died with Him. When Jesus was buried, our identification with Christ, we were buried with Him. When Jesus rose from the dead, we rose with Him. So, He was crucified, and the scripture says He was delivered. God the Father, sent the Son and delivered Him for our sins, offenses or transgressions. The fact that it says our sins, or offenses or transgressions, indicates that it was a substitutionary atonement. He took our place. It was our transgressions, and He was raised again for our justification, for our righteousness.

Here is the summary. The summary is that God saves us the same way He saved Abraham. He didn't save him by his works. He didn't save him by religious rites. He didn't save him by law. Abraham got every blessing from God by faith, by faith in God's promises. Now, for us it is the same. Abraham believed God, and God gave him righteousness. What do we do? We believe God, and He gives us righteousness. Faith and belief are mentioned 16 times in Romans 4; impute, 11 times, justified or righteous is mentioned 11 times. So, God gives to us His righteousness through faith. Now, you might say, "Boy, he really really really is making this so clear." That's because this is bedrock foundational Biblical truth that we are right before God not by our good deeds or our own righteousness or our works, but we get righteousness from God by faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone. That is the only way anyone has ever been saved. That is the only way anyone will ever be saved. That is the way God saves sinners. As you move into chapter 5, he begins to talk about the blessings and the benefits of being justified by faith. This is an area that a lot of Christians, again, lack knowledge. They don't realize all the blessings that are theirs because they have been declared righteous in Christ, and they are part of the Christian life. You don't have to earn it, work for it or deserve it. It comes with the package—the peace of God and all that God brings to your heart once you've been justified. Let's pray.