

ROMANS 4:13-21 "Do Not Waver In The Promises Of God,
Give Him Glory!"

Up to this point, in chapter 4, Abraham has been the main character who is the example of how one can have a relationship with God. Paul explains that that relationship Abraham had, and the relationship we can have with God, will only come through faith in God and His promises.

And we pick up in verse 13 "It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith."

We saw last week what Paul meant by the offspring or the seed of Abraham in the context of his right standing with God.

Romans 4:9-12 ⁹ Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." ¹⁰ How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; ¹¹ and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, ¹² and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. Abraham was a man of faith in God and those of us, whether Jew or Gentile, are his offspring in the sense that we have placed our faith in God by trusting Christ to be our righteousness, just as Abraham did.

But what of the physical seed of Abraham who ultimately became the Jewish nation? Is there no truth to him being their father in the physical sense?

Well, he was. Abraham begat Isaac who begat Jacob who begat 12 sons who became the 12 tribes of Jacob. The name Jacob in Hebrew means to "take by the heel". The reason for this is because in Gen 25:25-26 which speaks of the births of Esau and Jacob it says, "The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. [Esau may mean hairy; he was also called Edom, which means red.] 26 After this, his

brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. [Jacob means he grasps the heel]

But there's another meaning for Jacob which the scriptures speak of and that is in a figurative sense; "he deceives".

Jacob lived up to his name on numerous occasions. Two such occasions are recorded in Gen 27:36 "Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!"

The 12 tribes of Jacob were the people God would later bring out of Egypt to be used by God in a very special way. But our Lord would not be represented by a man whose name was synonymous with deception. God changed his name to Israel..... and so, the 12 tribes of Israel.

The name Israel means "he will rule as God" which infers that God is his ruler and leader. God essentially says to Jacob, 'I will be your ruler and you will rule My people as you follow Me by faith and believe in the promise I gave to your grandfather Abraham.'

What was the promise? That his seed would be as numerous as the stars. This had to include physical descendants because through him the promise would be fulfilled. But the promise had to be embraced by faith. And who ultimately was spoken of as being the seed of Abraham?

Gal 3:16 "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," [Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 24:7] meaning one person, who is Christ."

You see, Abraham understood that although he would have an heir from his own body he realized that ultimately through this heir would come the Messiah. Abraham believed the Messiah would come and that it would be through his physical line.

If you've ever read the gospel of Matthew you can see quite clearly what that physical line was. In verse one of Matthew one it reads "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, *the son of Abraham:*"

And then for the next 15 verses you can follow who begat whom until you come to verse 16 which speaks of the One promised to be "the Seed" of Abraham; this seed who would fulfill the promises which can only be accepted by faith.

And so we come full circle. The promise of a Messiah was given to Abraham. He accepted it by faith. The promise is given to us. We accept it by faith and declare that the Messiah has come and only by faith through Him, Jesus Christ, may we be declared righteous, not guilty.

And so, even though there was a physical aspect to the seed promised, through whom the Messiah would be born, the seed promised always pointed to Jesus, and the seed God spoke of as being more numerous than the stars, and which Paul calls Abraham's descendants, is more spiritual in nature, because the promise was to be received by faith, not through the law.

And so Paul says in Gal 3:29 "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Why? Because we are of THE SEED, the promised One in whom we place our faith.

In Rom.4:13 Paul says that Abraham would be "heir of the world". Again, though that included certain physical promises fulfilled, like the Promised land, the ultimate expression of that promise was spiritual in nature.

That's why we, as believers in Christ, are referred to as "heirs according to promise". And what does it mean to be an heir in God's economy?

Gal 4:6-7 "Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir."

To be an heir you have to part of the family of God. And the beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that since none of us are automatically born-again into the Kingdom we are not natural heirs, therefore we must be adopted.

Being adopted is very special, especially when God, as Father, places His grace upon us and essentially says, 'I desire for you to be part of My family. Receive the promise of eternal life which is through faith in My Son Jesus Christ, who was also promised to Abraham.'

Being an heir includes receiving everything which Jesus, the Son of God, possesses for us. Forgiveness of the penalty of our sins,

eternal life, fellowship with our heavenly Father, and the eternal riches which are ours in Christ.

Paul's point is that these things cannot be possessed through trying to earn our way to heaven by keeping the law, but rather, like Abraham, receiving the promises by faith. Trusting God. Taking God at His word.

Being an heir is not limited to the physical descendants of Abraham, but includes the Jew along with the Gentile, who will simply humble himself before God and believe.

Eph 3:6 "This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus."

In fact, Paul speaks to this issue of trying to be an heir of Christ through any other means other than faith.

Rom 4:14-15 "For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, 15 because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression."

The NAS is closer to the literal translation of verse 14 ... "For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified."

What Paul is saying, is that Abraham was declared righteous by faith, not by observing the law. In fact, when God established this promise and declared Abraham just, through his faith, our Lord then established the only means by which man can be saved.

If the law was now the means by which men must be saved then faith is made void and the promise is nullified or worthless. Why? Because God is not a God of confusion first of all, and if He is going to bring in a different way of salvation, then the previous one must be done away with.

You can't have two or three or any number of ways to God other than the one He establishes. We can't have it both ways. If it's through the law then we have to get rid of faith. If it's faith the law will never do, as a means of salvation.

And so Paul makes the point in Gal 3:17 "What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise," which, by the way, Abraham accepted by faith.

Paul then explains why the law could never be the means by which man can be saved from the penalty of his sin.

Rom 4:15 "because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression."

We saw this a couple of weeks ago when Paul described the Godly use of the law given by God.

Rom 7:12-14 "So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. 13 Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. 14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin."

The law was our teacher to show us that we are sinful creatures who must be condemned by God who is just and holy and righteous. But the law was also a teacher or tutor to lead us to the One who fulfilled the law perfectly, stood in our place, and took the penalty we deserved, and then paid that penalty in full on the cross.

That same One who became our sacrifice for our sin is the same One referred by John the Baptist as the Lamb of God who **TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD**. But, He must be received by faith as Abraham received Him.

Rom 4:16-17 "Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. 17 As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." [Gen. 17:5] He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed--the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were."

Our salvation in Christ is by God's grace because it's a gift from Him. And as we saw last week you can't earn a gift. If you could it ceases to be a gift and then becomes a wage for services rendered.

And so, the promise to Abraham is fulfilled as it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." We are part of that promise if we have received Christ by faith.

The last part of verse 17 is very interesting and full of great hope. "the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were." Or as the NAS puts it, "even God who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which did not exist."

A lot of people in the world view Christianity as a bunch of rules laid down by man to take away all of his fun. The truth is that Christianity is all about life and death. It's about the hope we have in Christ who gives life, eternal life, so that I don't have to be separated from my God for eternity.

Our Lord paints a very graphic picture of how that which is dead can be made alive by God. In the case of Abraham God brought life where there was none.

Rom 4:18-21 "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." [Gen. 15:5] 19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead-- since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised."

Against all hope Abraham believed. Believed what? Believed that God would make him the FATHER of many nations. Now this was a problem for Abraham. He is told that he will be this father of many nations through a son he would have through his wife Sarah.

However, at the time of this promise from God, Abraham is still without a son and he's now almost 100 years old. Sarah is also no spring-chicken.

Listen to what God tells Abraham in Gen 17:16-17 "I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her." 17 Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?"

The point Abraham was making was that as far as having the ability to produce a child to a woman whose womb had been dead even in her youth, now will she bear a child at the age of 90?

But, God gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. And verse 18 tells us "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed...."

And then it says in Rom 4:19-21 "Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised."

Abraham was not swayed from his faith when a promise from God was set forth to him. He considered the facts, and then considered his awesome faithful God, and acted according to His belief in God.

Fact: You're too old to have a child and Sarah's dead womb from youth cannot produce a child.

Fact: God made a promise that you will have a child to Sarah.

Fact: God has the power to bring life from death.

Fact: God is faithful to His word.

Abraham understood that when God spoke to him He had the ability to perform that which He promised. And so Abraham had a choice. He could either be crippled in unbelief, as he tried to reason with himself about his inabilities, or he could take God at His word and trust God no matter what.

I love what Paul records in verse 18 "In hope against hope he believed." And then verse 19 "without becoming weak in faith."

Verse 20 "With respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God."

It would have been very easy for Abraham to come to God and say, 'my circumstances are just too much for me to handle', 'my present condition will not allow me to believe'. 'I do not understand how this can be worked out therefore I will not believe.'

But Abraham saw beyond his circumstances and his condition and he came to grips with his lack of understanding of how God would work this out but decided, 'no I will trust God anyway, I will not turn my back on the faithful God who promised to be with me.'

Abraham's story is a story of faith, but it's not a story-book novel with fictional characters who are bigger than life with the super-human capability of doing anything they can set their minds to.

Abraham was a real person like you and me, who was confronted with everyday problems where he was given a choice to believe God at His word, whether he fully understood all things or not.

You and I are given the same choices in our lives every day. There are things in this life we may not understand and yet we can't use that as an excuse not to trust God.

Our Lord spoke to the prophet Isaiah and explained to him how He works and how it may not always be fully understood.

Isa 55:8-11 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

God has a specific purpose for all of our lives. As adopted children in His family we have been called to represent our heavenly Father here on earth as we trust Him and believe who He is and believe that He has the ability to accomplish all things according to His will.

You and I have a promise we are to take by faith. That promise is summed up in Joh 3:16-18 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

As we accept Christ by faith another promise from God goes into effect. It's a promise Christ gave to His disciples in Joh 16:7 "But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."

Jesus spoke of His death and resurrection and after He left He sent the Counselor or the Helper, who is the Holy Spirit, to abide in us, who believed, to direct us and guide us into all truth.

It is through the Spirit of God that we may grow strong in faith. He enables us to look above for strength and He gives us the hope we need in a world which gives us no hope outside of Christ.

God will never leave us or forsake us but He tells us to live by faith not by sight. In other words, not to be consumed with the circumstances we may encounter which tends to cause us to look to self for answers instead of trusting God in all situations.

What happens when we grow strong in our faith in God? Like Abraham we give glory to God. How? By being the faithful, obedient servants of Christ we were called to be.

Abraham gave glory to God as he followed wherever the Lord led. He gave glory to God in his life when he refused to be swayed from the path of faith by unbelief; not trusting God.

He gave glory with his lips as he confessed that God was greater than any problem he may have including his inability to have a child. But He gave glory by not wavering in the promise given to him by God.

Trusting God is faith. Can God bring to life those who are dead in sin? You bet!

Ephesians 2:1-7 ^{NAU} And *you were dead in your trespasses and sins,* ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ⁴ ***But God, being rich in mercy,*** because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ ***even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ*** (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Can God deliver us from those things in our lives which enslave us and drag us down? You bet!

Can God come to our aid when the world attacks us and our faith?
You bet! What is it today that you think God can't do? If He is for
us who can be against us?

Trust Him with all your heart. Don't waver in unbelief. But if you
find yourself wavering ask God the Holy Spirit to be the Comforter
and guide and strength He promises to be. It all comes down to
trust and faith in our God who is able to perform all that He has
promised in Christ.

Give glory to God and live in the reality of His might and His
ability to give life to the dead and lead us in His victory in Christ
Jesus.