

Sermon Growth Guide

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Trust God | Romans 3:5-20

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Key Verse: “Without weakening in his faith, Abraham 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. (Romans 4:19)

Big Idea: Faith and trust go hand in hand. One puts faith in someone or something and then trusts that that object of their faith is trust-worthy, worthy of their faith and trust through faith in Jesus Christ.



Foundations

“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.” Everything visible and factual contradicted the promises of God. Abraham’s body was old and “as good as dead” and “Sarah’s womb was also dead.”

How could the God he knew perform the miracle of granting Abraham and Sarah a child in their old age? It would not take great faith in God but it would take faith in a great God.

It was not the amount of faith Abraham had but where they placed their faith.

As Paul put it in 2 Corinthians 4:18 puts it this way: “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” So much of our everyday lives we are victims of the visible. What we see is what we get. How can we change that?

Understanding God’s Word

The apostle Paul uses Abraham’s faith as a model for how we should live a life of faith. Abraham “believed God” more than he believed the realities that surrounded him. God has the power to bring life out of death. God can make something out of nothing. Abraham trusted God whom he could not see more than he trusted the earthly reality he could see. Again, he believed God when everything he knew and saw contradicted his beliefs. This was not blind optimism, but faith in God.

Applying God’s Word

Our lives are often messy and hard, and we might begin to believe that that is a failure of God’s plan. No, often it is God’s plan. Just as Abraham was challenged in his faith so we are often challenged in our faith to believe the God whom we cannot see more than the reality staring us right in the face. Is there a relationship, a circumstance, a reality in your life that is seemingly contradicting your trust and belief in God? Is “what is seen” overwhelming “what is unseen” in your life. As Pastor Tim shared last week, “this is the work of God that you believe.” Believing is work, hard work when life seems messy and hard.

Witnessing God’s Word

Take some time to identify the areas of your life in which you need to trust God and live by faith. Pray that you might have victory of faith over doubt, of trust over unbelief in that relationship, in that circumstance, in that difficult and painful reality in your life. Have faith in a great God whom you can trust with your whole life.

My son, Liam plays volleyball in high school. Our boys have been playing volleyball since COVID. It was the only sport happening! They love it. It matters where the ball bounces. Somebody calls it, in or out. It matters if someone touches the ball, if someone touches the net, all that stuff. And it's amazing how the parents can see if the call was wrong. If the call was against their team, it was wrong. I played tennis growing up. Lines matter. Imagine Wimbledon with all the line judges and umpires, but there are no lines, no net, just people randomly calling "Out!" "Fault!" "Let!" No lines. No net. That is how society feels today. No lines, no net, just hitting the ball and shouting as loud as you can, "That's out!" "No, it's not! That's in!" God has given us a gift. God gave us lines. God set up a net. It's called the law. We need the law, but it cannot save us. The law is a gift, but it cannot save us. What we need, even more than the law or how to call balls and strikes, in and out—what we need is faith in our Savior. This week in our series, Like Him We Rise, we talk about faith. To connect with God for salvation we have to Trust God. Abraham trusted God.

This section in Romans is where Paul uses Abraham to demonstrate that salvation comes by faith, not by works. Our relationship with God is made right, we are forgiven and made righteous before God, not by working our way up the ladder of goodness and obeying all the ins and outs of the Bible, the Law, but by putting our of faith in God's promises and allowing God to give us forgiveness and righteousness as a gift of grace. Not something we earn; a gift we receive. It is good for us to obey the law. The more joyful obedience we can have in our lives, the better. But it can't save us. We can't save ourselves.

Not even Abraham—the superhero of Judaism—earned his way into God's favor by keeping the law. God gave him favor as a gift of grace. God made Abraham a promise; Abraham believed God and God credited that faith to him as righteousness. How about us? What about when it gets hard? What about when all the evidence is stacked against faith and trust in God? What about then? Faith will either grow or shrink in the face of trials. Trust God.

How does it work? How are we saved? "It was not through the 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." (Romans 4:13) Abraham believed God and was credited with righteousness long before the law, technically, was even there. Moses on the mountain, the Ten Commandments, all that was 430 years after Abraham believed. Rabbis would teach that Abraham was rewarded by God for being faithful, which, I mean, read it. Sometimes he was. A lot of times he wasn't. Yet here is the promise, that his offspring would inherit the world. The whole world would eventually be blessed, be reached, through this faith. "For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless." (Romans 4:14) There's no point to faith in the promise if salvation comes as an inheritance based on keeping the law. What does the law do? "Because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression." (Romans 4:15)

Let's think about this. This is back to tennis with no lines. If there are no lines, there is no calling "out." There is no transgression, no crossing the line. There is no line. When the law defines the

line, then there is a call to make, the transgression, and that's when God is required to exercise justice. "Out." That's wrath. Not unhinged anger, but faithful resolve to call in and out with justice. Law brings transgression which brings wrath. No lines; no crossing the lines. No rules; no breaking the rules. One way to eliminate illegal drug use is to legalize drug use. One way to get zero arrests for prostitution is to legalize it. Do we really believe that will work out for human flourishing? No. The lines are there. They have been drawn by our Creator. When we don't see them, we don't notice our transgression. The law brings these lines into relief. It's like the Wimbledon replay video. "Out." But we are all going to hit some out and hit some in. That's not how we are saved. It depends on the promise, the grace, and the faith. "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 have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all." (Romans 4:16)

"As it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.' He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not." (Romans 4:17) It isn't the presence of faith that matters, but the object of faith. Abraham believed in God. "God, in whom he believed." And why can he put his faith in God? Because God has the character and the power to keep his promises. This is the God who has the power of resurrection, "gives life to the dead," and the power of creation, "brings things into being from nothing." This is not blind faith; this is reasonable trust. Abraham didn't go whistling in the dark. Abraham took a

full assessment of the situation. He was near 100 and Sarah not much behind. "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.' 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." (Romans 4:18-19) God has the power to bring life out of death. God can make something out of nothing. He trusted. He believed. This was not blind optimism, but faith in God. Abraham had full knowledge of the reality. Against that reality, he set up what he knew about God. God is the Creator who brought all things into being out of nothing. God has the power to bring life. There comes a point when you need to stop talking to God about your problems and start talking to your problems about God.

Abraham's faith was not weakened, it says. Rather, his faith was strengthened. How? Because in the face of the realities of the situation, Abraham looked to the character and power of God. He measured the two. The reality. The God. The reality. The God. Maybe God is the reality. He trusted God. Later in his life, Abraham came up against the worst trial and test of faith. God asked Abraham to take Isaac, his only son, and march him up Mount Moriah and sacrifice him like a lamb. Genesis 22. Abraham led him like a lamb to the slaughter. His son Isaac even asked him. "Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, 'Father?' 'Yes, my son?' Abraham replied. 'The fire and wood are here,' Isaac said, 'but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?'" (Genesis 22:7) And what did Abraham say to his boy? "Abraham answered, 'God himself will

provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' And the two of them went on together." (Genesis 22:8) Trust God. Trust God.

My son, Jack, was born on Pentecost Sunday, the year 2000. They rushed him to the NICU because his blood pressure was different in his four limbs, all different. That's not good. They said, "It could be nothing, or it could be that his aorta is not attached to his heart and we need to rush him into surgery to try to save him." Oh. A test was scheduled for hours later. I spent some time with the Lord. I wish I could say I was calm, accepting, peaceful, trusting. I was not. I remember saying, "Lord, if you take my son, my only son...I don't know where we will be after that, you and I." Honest. Thank God, he was okay. Over the years I have sat with parent after parent who lost their child, their dear child, their son, their only son, their daughter, their sweet daughter. My faith has grown watching you; praying with you, hurting with you. Trust God. It doesn't mean the results will be our desires. Sometimes it isn't nothing; it's everything. The loss, the pain, the long road of grief. Can we trust God then?

Abraham took this child of promise up the mountain. The Lord will provide the sacrifice. "When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son." (Genesis 22:9-10) Of all the moments in Abraham's life, this was the one. This was the hardest moment to trust God. If ever there was a moment when Abraham was on the edge of saying, "Forget it. I'm walking away." This was it. He had said to his

boy, "The Lord will provide the sacrifice." Did he mean it? I don't know. Just then an angel cried out. "Do not lay a hand on that boy." "Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided." (Genesis 22:13-14)

The trials come. When the test comes, when the day of trial comes, can you trust God? He has the power. This is the one true God. The Maker of Heaven and Earth. He has the power. He also has the character. Abraham did not give his son. God did. "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." (John 3:16) On the dark day of stormy trial, faith either grows or shrinks, it grows solid or dissipates like mist. Lord, help us all on that day, to trust. And when we do, take our mustard seed of faith and credit it. "The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." (Romans 4:23-25) Whatever pain we feel, God has felt it too. Trust God.