

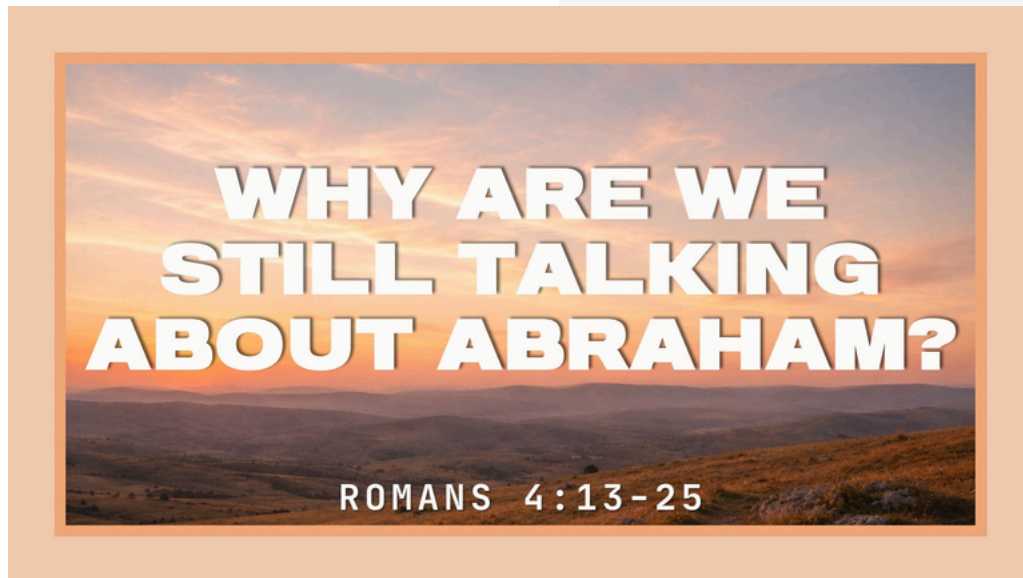
CCLEB SERMON NOTES



SUNDAY AUGUST 9, 2026
ROMANS 4:13-25

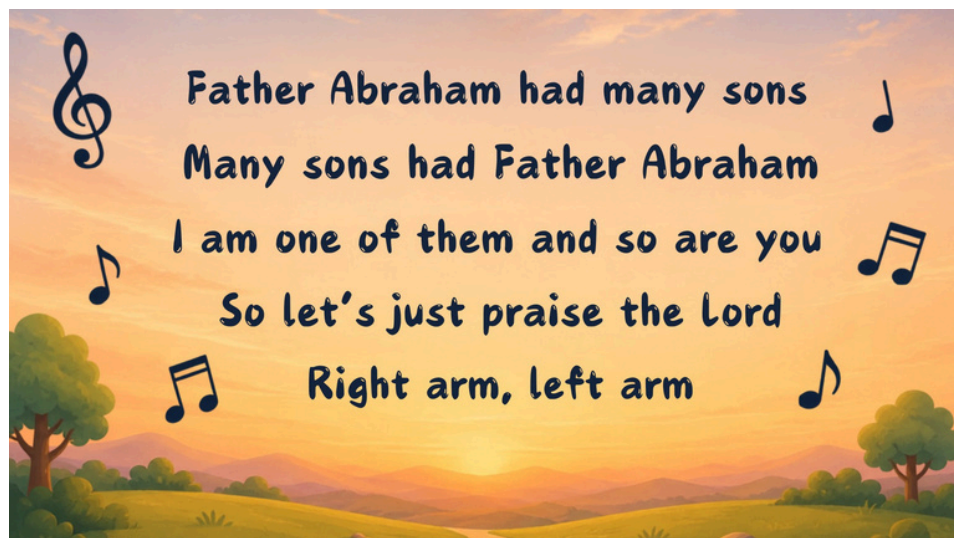
PASTOR DUANE MILLER

WHY ARE WE STILL TALKING ABOUT ABRAHAM?



Why are we still talking about Abraham? We studied Abraham for 14 chapters in Gen, and now here in Romans we're still talking about him?! What's the big deal with Abraham, and why does he matter to me?

Here is why:



Now wait a minute, I'm not Jewish, and neither are most of you, yet we just sang about Abraham as our father. Meaning, we are in his family - Father Abraham's family. So how does that work? That, my friends, is exactly Paul's point.

Now before we go on... today and just today... anytime you hear me say Father Abraham you can start singing 🎵. And it needs to be in that order... Father Abraham.

In Paul's letter to the Romans in AD 57, Paul is writing to both Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus living in Rome.

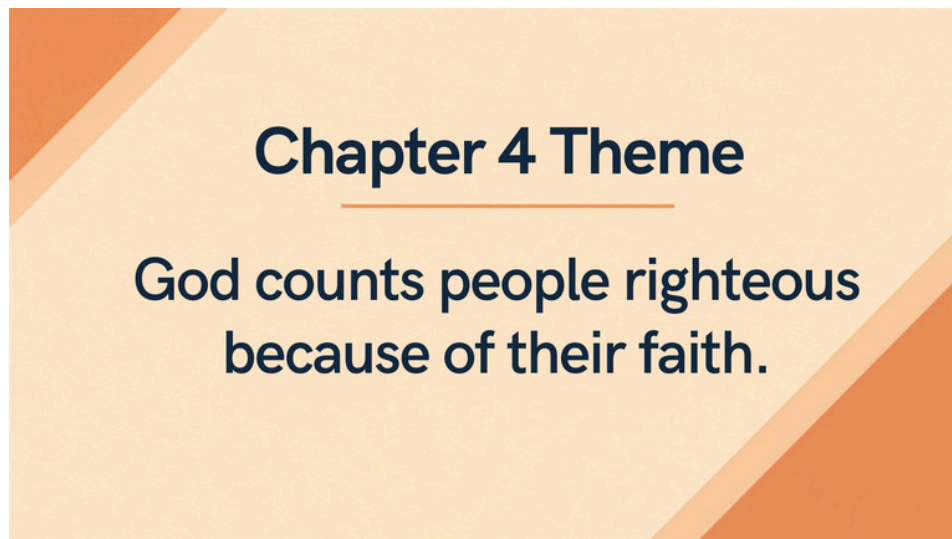
The Roman Gentiles – what the Jews call everyone who is not Jewish – are civilized and educated- and free and control the known world. The Roman Jews are ... Jewish. They are God's chosen people, they follow the Torah – the law and do Torah things like circumcision.

People in Rome from both groups, the Jews and the Gentiles have come to faith in Christ, and they make up the church Paul is writing to, a church that is divided. Paul wants them to see themselves as one covenant family under Jesus Christ.

And here is where we go back to Genesis and Abraham. The narrative of Genesis one through Genesis eleven is God establishing his covenant faithfulness, meaning all the reasons why God is worthy of our trust. Think of God's covenant faithfulness from generation to generation from Adam to Noah to Abraham.

And with Abraham, God wanted to create a covenant family. A covenant family that could live in and with the blessing of secure relationship with God their father, worthy of everyone's trust. And God's desire was that the entire world would be blessed by this covenant family. So, let's look at our passage today and see how that happens.

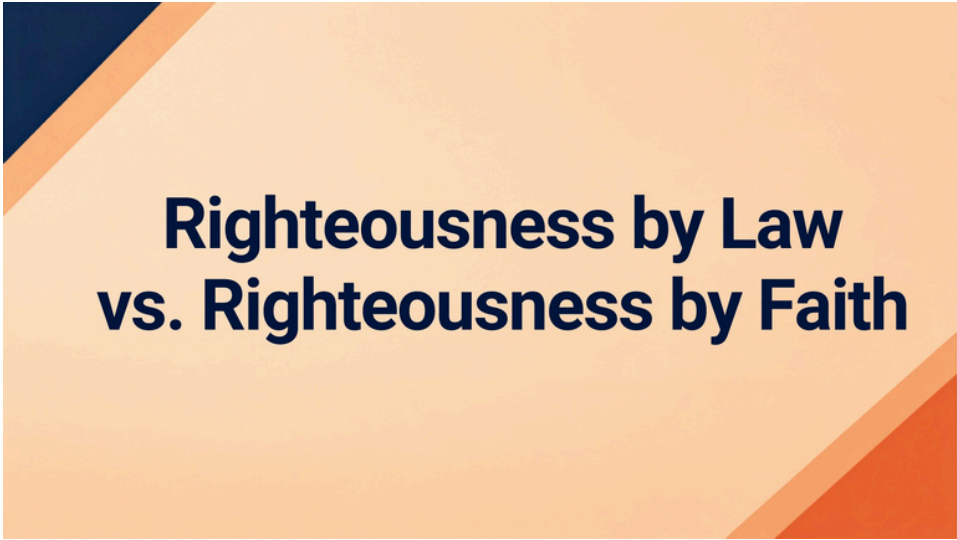
Romans chapter four opens and closes with the same theme **Romans 4:3, 22** And we know that when a biblical author opens and closes a section with the same theme, the whole passage is about that. Here's the theme:



As Micah Natal pointed out in his excellent message last week, Abraham believed the LORD (**Genesis 15:6**) and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith. That happened long before Abraham took the sign of the covenant – circumcision. Meaning that it wasn't Abraham's being circumcised or following the law that earned him righteousness, rather it was his faith – simply believing what God said would happen.

So related to Abraham being “Father Abraham” ♪ to us, **verse 11b** says. So technically Paul is saying Abraham is our Father, because he was the first who was counted as righteous by God because of his faith. Which means that Abraham is the father all of us who are counted as righteous by God because of our faith. ♪ “I am one of them (by faith) and so are you...” ♪

Paul picks up on this in **verse 13**. This verse hi-Lites the main dispute of righteousness by law vs righteousness by faith. The NLT uses the wording of “right relationship with God”, which gives us a helpful perspective of what “righteousness by faith” means.



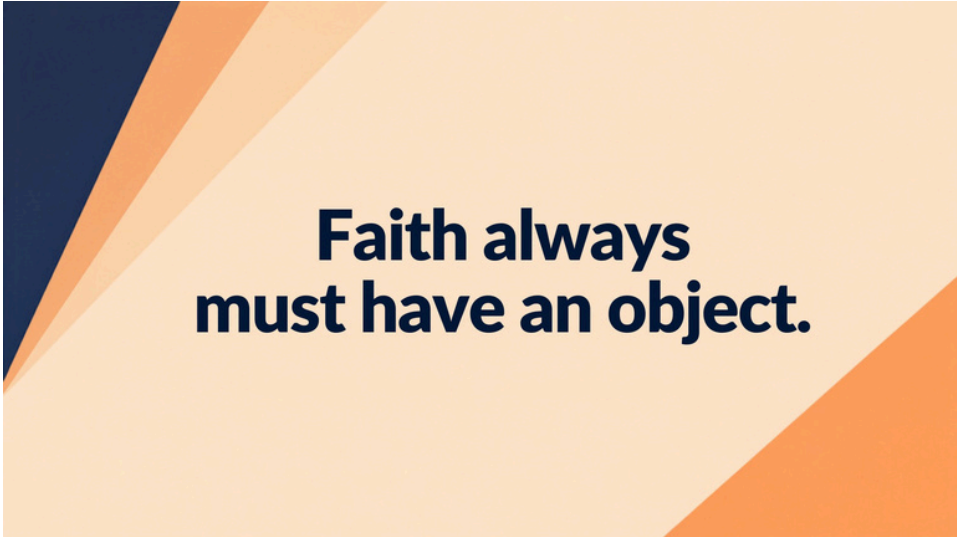
Righteousness by Law vs. Righteousness by Faith

If there is a “right relationship with God” then there is also a wrong relationship with God. Think about it this way.

Imagine two people who are legally married – same last name, same address, same wedding certificate in a drawer somewhere signed by a pastor– but no real relationship, no trust. They live like strangers under one roof. Legally, on paper, they’re married. Relationally, they’re estranged.

Now imagine another couple who talks every day, and shares everything, trusts each other deeply. Both couples have the same legal status – married – but a completely different relationship. That’s the gap between having the right religious paperwork – the law, the rituals – and actually having a right relationship with God. Abraham didn’t just have the paperwork. He trusted God – and that trust is what made the relationship right. Paul tells us that the right relationship with God is by faith.

Faith. Let’s talk about the mechanics of faith, how it works. Faith always must have an object. To help us understand this, let’s substitute the word trust for faith.



Faith always must have an object.

When you think about trusting you tend to think about it in terms of trusting in something.

I trust the chair is going to hold me when I sit down.
I trust the elevator cable to hold me.
I trust the gas pump to give me a true gallon.
I trust the dog to clean up any food that hits the floor.
I trust the five second rule if it doesn’t.

So we trust in something. The chair, the elevator cable, the gas pump, the dog... You put your faith in or on something.

Faith must always have an object of the faith. Let me ask, what is the object of your faith for right standing with God?

Paul's point in **verse 14** is if the law makes you part of the covenant family – “then faith is not necessary”. And that would make Paul's statement in **Romans 1:17** a lie. “...that it is through faith that a righteous person shall live”. But if **verse 17** wasn't true, it would have to say “it is through the law that a righteous person shall live.”

So in **Romans 4:13** Paul is arguing that those who put their trust in the law, the object of their faith, to make them right before God, have put their trust in the wrong thing. It's misplaced trust – trust in something that can never deliver. Have you ever trusted in something that can never deliver? Decaf coffee, skim milk, non-dairy cheese... you get my point. It will never deliver. Neither will the law.

In **verse 15** Paul adds that not only will the law never deliver, but the law only brings “punishment” to those who futilely try to obey it. Where one trusts the law for righteousness they instead get punishment. It's a double whammy. It's not just that the law can never deliver righteousness, but further it always delivers punishment.

It's like driving your car into a car wash hoping for a clean car and come out covered in manure. Picture that! Imagine sitting in that car? What's wrong with those suds? Why are the suds greenish brown? And what's that smell? How shocking and disappointing (and gross) that would be!!



That's the same with trusting the law to deliver righteousness – the law is only going to deliver disappointment and punishment.

And because the law can only deliver disappointment and punishment, Paul says back in **verse 14** if God's promise was based on following the law, God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham is pointless. Why pointless? Because the law can't deliver righteousness, but only punishment, so what the point? Think about God's character. Would God make a promise that is pointless? Of course not!

Verse 16. Note that in **verse 13** the key words were promise and law – but now in **verse 16** Paul clarifies that the promise is received not by the law but by faith. Promise received by faith.

And Paul adds that it is a “gift”. A gift, not earned, not wages, not manipulation, a gift.

Think about a father who hands his daughter the keys to a car on her eighteenth birthday – not because she earned a single mile of it, and not because the father wants anything back – just because she's his daughter and the father loves her. No invoice, no strings, nothing to pay back. That's what Paul means by “gift”. Righteousness doesn't come to us as a paycheck we earned or a favor we were owed – righteousness comes as a gift from a Father who simply wanted to give it.

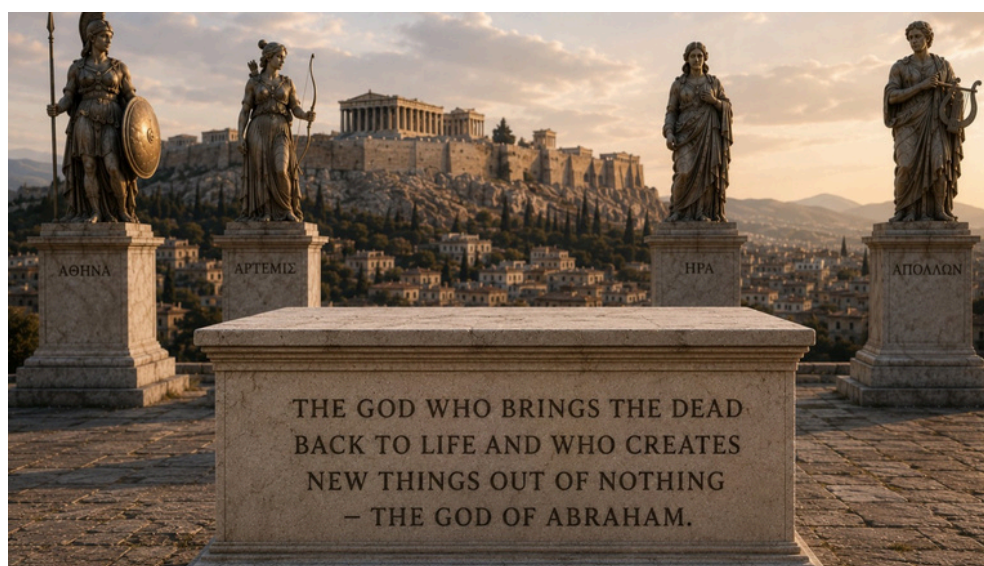
And Paul says in the end of v16 “we are all certain to receive it (the gift) if we have... what? _____ faith like Abrahams”. For Abraham is the father of all who believe.

Curious though, what is it that Abraham believed in or trusted in that made him the “father of many nations”?

Verse 17 answers that. Abraham believed in God, Abraham trusted in God. God was the object of his faith, not law, not circumcision, faith.

Paul specifies that this God who Abraham trusted is the one who “brings the dead back to life, and who creates new things out of nothing”.

Picture Athens in Paul’s day – a “god flea-market” where every god was represented by a statue on a pedestal, each one promising something: fertility, crops, pleasure. Now picture one pedestal standing empty, with an inscription unlike all the others: “The God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing – the God of Abraham.” That’s Abraham’s review. Is this God worth considering?



Abraham apparently thought so. So much so that he staked his life and his son Isaac’s life on it. Abraham, in his day, was surrounded by pagan gods (lower case g) many gods he could have chosen from, all with various assigned credentials, yet he chose this God. “The God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing”.

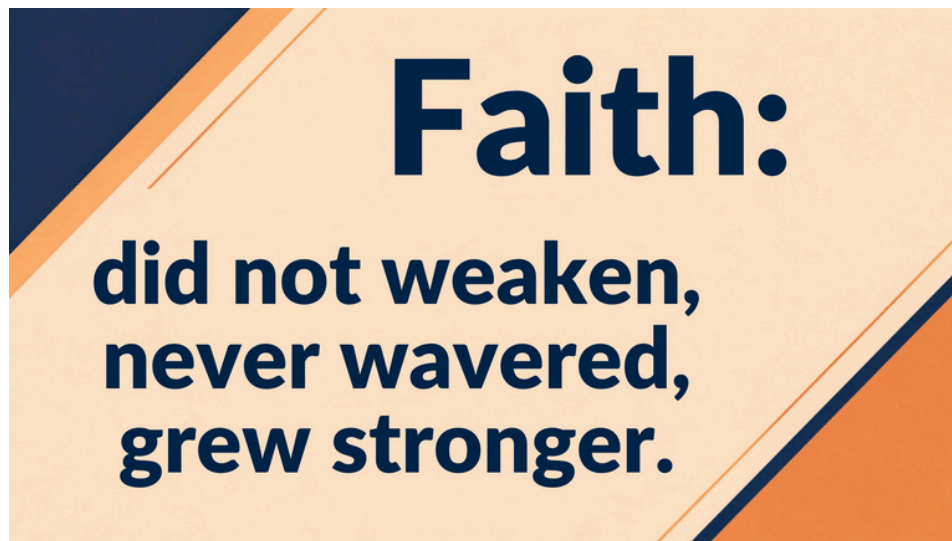
Everyone coming to faith is a journey so how did Abraham arrive there? V18-19 reminds us of the story of the hardship of infertility that Abraham and Sarah experienced. They couldn’t have children. Yet God had told Abraham in his old age that he would be “the father of many nations”. How could that be if they had no children? **Verses 18-19.**

It was reasonable at age 100 for Abraham to consider his reproductive capabilities “dead”, and likewise to consider Sarah’s 90-year-old womb that never bore children also “dead”.

If you had a 90-year-old mango tree that had never produced mangos, not once, not even blossoms, it’s reasonable to expect that it never will. From a mango producing perspective it is dead.

Yet, **verse 19** tells us Abraham’s faith in God’s promise “did not weaken” – and then **verse 20**. That’s an awesome progression of faith considering the circumstances of their age and the deadness of their reproductive ability.

Look at this progression:



And the result of that faith? **Verse 21** tells us Abraham "was fully convinced...".

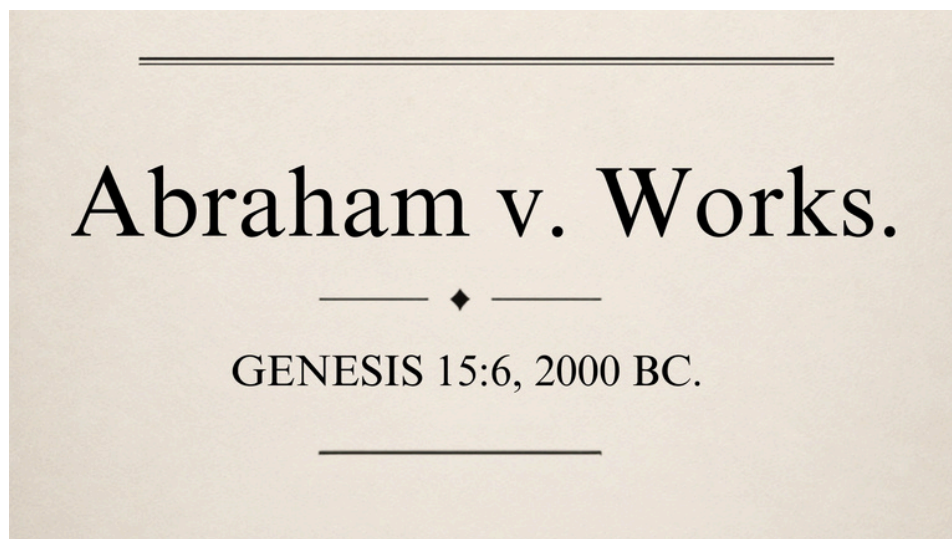
"God is able to do whatever He promises". Do you hear that? (repeat it with me) Are you convinced of that?

Verse 22. Because of Abraham's faith God counted him as righteous. Abraham's "faith" was trusting in "The God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing".

Verses 23-24. Abraham being counted as righteous by God because of his faith was for my benefit, your benefit.

Now follow me here, that act of God counting Abraham as righteous because of his faith in God, set the rule for how God counts people as righteous.

Paul quotes this rule like case law. Abraham v. Works. Gen 15:6, 2000 BC. Case law is precedent – a past ruling that becomes the standard by which every similar case afterward is decided. That includes me, that includes you and the billions of others between Abraham and us, we "are counted as righteous because of faith."



So based on the ruling on Abraham v. Works we can, as it says in **verse 24**, be "assured that God will also count us righteous if we believe in Him". This ruling of – "his faith was counted as righteousness" – has stood for 4,000 legit years, that's enough for you to trust in, don't you think?

So now Abraham's story becomes personal. Why should I believe in Abraham's God? Why should I put my trust in him?

For the same reason that Abraham did. Because he is “The God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing”. Everything else falls short.

Here’s how that verse came true outside of Abraham’s life. 2000 years after Abraham this same God rose Jesus our Lord from the dead. Dead. Just like Abraham & Sarah’s ability to reproduce was dead and God miraculously made it alive and gave them the promised son. He created a son out of nothing.

Jesus our Lord was also dead. And on the third day God miraculously made him alive.

Verse 25 tells us Jesus died for “our sins and was raised to life to make us right with God”. Abraham being counted as righteous by faith was for our benefit. Jesus dying for our sins and being raised to new life was also for our benefit.

Look how Paul explains it in **Ephesians 2:1, 4-6**. And that new life, Paul describes this way in **2 Corinthians 5:17**, read it with me. What makes you righteous in God’s sight is faith in Jesus Christ alone.

So, let’s bring this to conclusion. Hold on to the ruling in Abraham v. Works: It’s not law-keeping, not effort, not religious performance, not what you wear – that counts as righteousness. Faith in God and in his provision of Jesus is what God counts as righteousness. That’s the precedent. That’s the ruling by which every case before God gets decided, including yours, including mine. And thru Jesus we are made alive in him.

But let’s also apply this to our daily walk with God now. **Verse 17** says God “creates new things out of nothing” – and that includes you and me. Whatever felt dead in Abraham’s life – his body, Sarah’s womb, their hope for a son – God brought it to life. And **Verse 20** tells us what Abraham’s trust did in return: it “brought glory to God.” His faith wasn’t just good for him; it honored the One he trusted.

That’s still how it works. Every time you choose to trust God with something that feels as dead as Abraham’s hundred-year-old body – a broken relationship, a diagnosis, a fear, a habit you can’t break – you’re not just getting help. You’re bringing God glory, the same way Abraham did.

And you can trust Him, because He has already proven Himself. The God who gave Abraham and Sarah a son when their bodies were as good as dead is the same God who raised Jesus from the grave when sin and death had done their worst. God has never once failed to deliver on a promise. He is not going to start with yours.

So, whatever you’re carrying into this week – bring it to Him. Trust Him with it. Not because you’ve earned an answer, but because that’s exactly what Abraham did, and it’s exactly what he’s inviting you to do too. Amen?

BONUS

CONTENT:

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