

## Trusting in the Promises of God

Culture of Grace: Practices & Habits of GracePoint Church / Romans 4:18-21 / June 8, 2025

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### Introduction:

As I mentioned to the kids, we are considering what it looks like to walk by faith by examining how Paul describes the faith of Abraham in Romans 4:18-21. Let me start with some context for our passage. Romans 1-3 lays the foundation of the gospel, showing how all people have sinned and are deserving of the wrath of God. Because sin has wreaked havoc on humanity, we can do nothing on our own to be justified in the sight of God and need a righteousness that comes apart from any ability to keep God's law or personal heritage. Romans 3 concludes by revealing that the righteousness we need comes only through faith in Christ sacrifice, so that God is both "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." Then, in Romans 4, Paul shows how Abraham was declared righteous by his faith to help us see how faith has always been the only way to be justified in God's sight. What I want to consider is how Paul describes Abraham's faith and what it tells us about our own. Romans 4:18-21 reveals two truths about Abraham's faith. First,

### Abraham's Faith was built the Promise of God

Notice how Paul focuses on Abraham believing in something specific. Look at verses 18-21 with me, "In hope he [Abraham] believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, 'So shall your offspring be.'" He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised." When Paul says, "In hope Abraham believed against hope," he means Abraham's hope moved him to believe in something even when everything suggested there was little hope of it being possible. Note what he believed in. Verse 18, Abraham believed he would "become the father of many nations, as he had been told." Then Paul quotes Genesis 15:5, where God said "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.... So shall your offspring be." Verse 20, "No unbelief made him waiver concerning the promise of God." And verse 21, he was convinced "God was able to do what he had promised." Abraham's faith wasn't that God would simply do something good for him. It was in a specific promise God made to him. Abraham believed in something very tangible, despite everything that told him to do otherwise. This is what Hebrews 11:1 is talking about when it says, "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Family, God promises specific things to hope for and faith recognizes those promises are more sure than anything our eyes can see. First, we see that Abraham's faith was built on the specific promise of God. Second, we see that,

### Abraham's Faith was Strengthened by God's Ability to Keep His Promises

Notice, next, how Paul describes Abraham's faith. Look at verses 19-20 again with me, "He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God." Note how Paul establishes a contrast between how Abraham did not weaken or waver in his faith but grew strong. Also, note how we are told twice that Abraham considered the challenges. He "considered his own body," which was really old, and "considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb," meaning her inability to have kids. He doesn't turn a blind eye to things that would have cause his faith to weaken or waver. He didn't deny the realities of life and pretend they didn't exist to believe in God's promises. As I shared with the kids, there were even moments where Abraham questioned how God was going to fulfill His promise. Yet, Paul says, "he grew strong in his faith." What caused Abraham to grow strong when facing those moments of doubt? Pay close attention to verses 20-21. Look there again, "No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised."

As Abraham considered the difficulties of his situation, he gave glory to God by weighing them against God's power to keep His promise. In the end, his faith didn't rest on what he could do, or even his ability to understand everything. It rested firmly on who God was. Regardless of everything he saw around him, and all the obstacles and impossibilities, Abraham knew who He was trusting in, the God who created and sustains everything. I love how John Stott sums this up, "He glorified God by letting God be God, and by trusting him to be true to himself as the God of creation and resurrection" (John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*, 134). Family, our faith grows strong when God's power and faithfulness to keep His promises outweighs what we see. Yet, pay attention to the fact that Abraham's faith needed to be strengthened. Verses 19-20 describe Abraham wrestling with reasons not to believe in God's promises. However, that unbelief didn't make him waver, but he grew strong in faith. The point is faith overcomes momentary unbelief. Faith doesn't deny what we see, it just doesn't trust in what we see. Then it fights to trust in what is unseen, strengthening that trust with the character and power of God. Abraham's faith was built on the promise of God and strengthened by God's ability to keep His promise. This brings us to our application this morning,

### **Walking by Faith involves Trusting in the Promises of God**

Paul meticulously works to show us Abraham's faith was tied to a specific promise of God and strengthened by God's character and power. Right before this description of Abraham's faith, Paul calls Abraham the father of us all in Romans 4:16. Following our passage, Paul says in verses 22-25, "That is why faith was 'counted to him as righteousness.' But the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." He is saying, "follow the example of Abraham's faith. Know the promise of God to justify and redeem us, through faith in Christ, is a real promise we can trust in because it comes from our promise making and keeping God. Church, this is the foundational promise of the gospel to believe in. God's is able and faithful to forgive your sin and declare you righteous through faith in Jesus Christ. And when you are convinced of God's ability to keep that promise and redeem you through the blood of Jesus Christ, you walk in the faith of Abraham. Yet, God calls us to more than just having faith in that promise. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, "we walk by faith." The original language speaks of this as an ongoing and continuous action. Faith isn't starting blocks that we simply launch off of, it is an integral part of each step taken. And walking by faith involves trusting in all that God promises to be for us in Christ Jesus. Family, I have said this often. The most astonishing thing about Christianity is that God makes promises to us. And those promises are real and tangible promises found in His Word. Walking by faith involves trusting in those real and tangible promises. What does it look like, then, to walk by faith? Before moving to Abu Dhabi, our family traveled there to candidate for my role on staff. We hoped to have God confirm the call to go on the trip but returned home with no definitive sense of calling. After wrestling with a decision for months, my lovely wife gently asked me on our date night to lead our family and make the decision. So, I prayed and asked God to wake me up the next day with a clear sense that we were supposed to go if that was His calling. I woke up the next day with no sense of yes, so I brought coffee to Holly and said, "I don't think we are called to go." She asked why and I said because I didn't have a clear sense to say yes. Holly responded, "I don't like that reason, you need pray more." So, I decided sit on the no decision and pray for God to give me peace with it. I was a wreck the whole day, and the next morning, my study Matthew's gospel ended with Matthew 19:29, which says, "everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life." It was like God was speaking to my heart and saying, "do you trust in this promise?" I immediately understood my hesitation to say yes was because I would be taking my wife and kids away from our home, family and friends. So, I told Holly I knew God is calling us to go, trusting in that promise. Here's where God's grace gets sweet. We struggled at first in Abu Dhabi. Our kids missed our home and family, and there were only 3 kids our daughter's age, so friendships were tough to find.

But, over the next 4 months, multiple families came to the church and there ended up being around a dozen girls our daughters age running around the church. And after over 4 years there, we developed deep friendships and found family from all around the world. Now, Jesus' promise in Matthew 11:29 is primarily related to God's blessings in eternal life, but as I walked by faith in that promise for my family, God was faithful to strengthen my faith in that promise with a taste of it in this life. Yet, this doesn't just apply to promises for specific callings. Here's how I use God's promises in my regular life. I have always struggled in extended seasons of difficulties. I have deep valleys of discouragement and get anxious very easily. My body gets restless, my heartbeat ramps up, and I will end up in a panic attack before I know it. Even menial tasks can feel overwhelming. Just a few weeks ago, I had a moment when choosing what to eat for dinner sent me down a spiral. Over the years, I have learned to turn to specific promises from God in these battles. When I feel myself beginning to get anxious, I pause, think on or search for a promise from God's Word, meditate on it, and pray for God to help me know that He will keep that promise. Here is one I have been using recently. Isaiah 26:3, "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you." That is a powerful promise. In my recent moments of discouragement, or when my heart is getting anxious, I have been recounting that promise and doing what it says. I set my mind on the Lord by thinking of His power, love and mercy consistently shown to His people. How He worked in Joseph's life or brought the Israelites across the Red Sea. How He protected the apostles in Acts and gave them the strength to rejoice in their sufferings. I contemplate these things and ways the Bible speaks of God's power and character. Then, I pray and ask God to strengthen my faith in His promise to keep me in perfect peace, repeat this until my heart is calmed and my faith is strengthened. Do you see how that is different than simply believing God will somehow work everything out? Family, I believe God gave us tangible promises in His Word so we would have them to cling to. He doesn't call us to have faith that He will arbitrarily do something good for us; He calls us to trust in the specific promises He has made. And one of the primary purposes of studying God's Word is to discover His promises and be reminded of His ability to keep them.

### **Conclusion:**

As the worship team is coming up to lead us in a time of response, take time to consider how you are using God's promises to grow strong in faith. Have you trusted in God's promise of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? If not, that is the most important promise to cling to. If you are trusting in the promise of the gospel, are you walking by faith in all God promises to be for you in Jesus? Or are you living life in your own power? What would change if you battled your difficulties with God's promises? Hebrews 11:6 says, "without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." Family, run to God's Word and find a treasure trove of promises to cling to as you trust in all that God promises to be for you in Christ. What if that is how we helped others when they are struggling? When you are listening to someone share their difficulties, ask God to give you a promise to share with them. Then share that promise with them to strengthen their faith. Respond to God's Word today by asking for Him to reveal His promises through His word. Then, strive to be fully convinced that He will keep His promises and have that strengthen your faith. As always, if you have any need for prayer, we have a team of people read to pray for you. You will find them worshipping during these songs on the front row, or at the bottom of the stairs in the back. Let's respond and seek God's grace together. Would you pray with me?