

# Trust in God's Power

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**Introduction:** God says there are no human efforts that can remove our sin and no human is without sin which guarantees our condemnation. God is sinless and heaven is a place without sin. It cannot be blessed or even welcome unless it is a place without the misery, grief and death that sin brings. Sin is the Mount Everest of obstacles in any quest to be right with God.

Sadly...most people do not believe that God has a righteous standard and that every evil deed will and must be made right. Humanity cries out for justice in their world, but rejects the idea of God acting justly toward them.

**Romans 2:13** <sup>13</sup> for *it is* not the hearers of the Law *who* are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

**James 2:10** <sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all.

**Revelation 20:12** <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

Men and women believe they are essentially good enough and God should be willing to accept them. This is particularly true of those who practice religion and ritual. "Surely", they reason, "the doing of these things will balance out any wrong that I have done!" But sadly it will not. To make this point Paul has spent all of chapter four discussing Abraham, the father of the Jewish people who was considered righteous by virtue of his godly works.

The life and salvation of Abraham actually prove the point that Paul has been making all along. Justification or salvation cannot be earned, deserved or possessed by doing things. Men are sinners at the cellular level. What we discover here is that Abraham was justified by believing God. He was saved by Faith Alone and it happened over four centuries before there was even a Law to keep. Abraham trusted the **Provision of God**. He trusted the **Promise of God** and He trusted the **Power of God** to save him.

**Romans 4:18-25** <sup>18</sup> In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE." <sup>19</sup> Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; <sup>20</sup> yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, <sup>21</sup> and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. <sup>22</sup> Therefore IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. <sup>23</sup> Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, <sup>24</sup> but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe

in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, <sup>25</sup> *He* who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

- He believed God has Power to do the impossible [18-19]
- He believed God has Power to keep His promise [20-21]
- He believed God has Power to save men [22-25]

## **He believed God had Power to do the impossible [18-19]**

**In hope against hope he believed [18a]:** The NIV puts this plainly and accurately.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 4:18** Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed.

In English “hope” is like wishful thinking, but not in the Bible. There it means a strong expectation not a strong expectation. Like faith, it is as powerful as the person in whom you place it. Here is just one example....

**Hebrews 10:21-23** <sup>21</sup> .....since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup> Let us hold fast the confession of **our hope** without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

Abraham knew how old he was, but he also knew God and trusted Him. He believed God made the world and everything in it. That He was the life giver and therefore in control of the order of nature. He only hoped to father a nation because God had told him he would. IT was NOT wishful thinking, but an expectation.

**Genesis 15:1-6** After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great." <sup>2</sup> Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" <sup>3</sup> And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." <sup>4</sup> Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." <sup>5</sup> And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." <sup>6</sup> Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

**So that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE." [18b]:** There are a lot of Jews these days, but at the time God said this there were none. But the only way this was going to happen would be through the promise keeping power of God. God's Word is not like ours. We are full of hot air...He is not! Peter writes that mockers of God's Word are saying ....

**2 Peter 3:4-7** <sup>4</sup> ..... "Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." <sup>5</sup> For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that **by the word of God** *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, <sup>6</sup> through which the world at

that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. <sup>7</sup> But **by His Word** the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

**Psalm 33:8-9** <sup>8</sup> Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. <sup>9</sup> For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

Abraham reasoned that a God with such power to create and judge with no more than a word could easily make a great nation from this childless 100 year old couple. And so....

**Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb [19]:** There is no such thing as blind faith when a person can see and hear God. Let me explain. The faith was not in their ability to have a child at their age. It was in God. The body grows old and unable to reproduce, but God speaks the world and all life into existence.

Abraham was not exercising blind faith! He was trusting the provision, promise and power of Almighty God. The reality was that he was 99 at this time and Sarah was 90. The lesson here is that it is alright to consider the realities that we live with. That makes God's provision even more awesome. Have you ever said, "I can't believe God did that!?" That is not a lack of faith, it is using the mind you have to consider your earthbound natural circumstances. The promise seems impossible to fulfill based on those. How likely was it that God could thread the needle of prophecy down through 8 centuries to arrive at the manger without a single glitch or errant prediction? Now consider this...Do you think He is capable of doing the same thing going forward? Absolutely! Christ will come again! He will sit on David's Throne and He will rule a kingdom into which all nations will stream.

Let's illustrate our faith with a question. "How likely does it seem to you today, that God will convert Egypt, Syria and Iraq as nations, to Christ?" 0% Looking at the world and the way it is today....0%. Now listen to the Word of God...

**Isaiah 19:19 - 20:1** <sup>19</sup> In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD near its border. <sup>20</sup> It will become a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Champion, and He will deliver them. <sup>21</sup> Thus the LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day. They will even worship with sacrifice and offering, and will make a vow to the LORD and perform it. <sup>22</sup> The LORD will strike Egypt, striking but healing; so they will return to the LORD, and He will respond to them and will heal them. <sup>23</sup> In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. <sup>24</sup> In that day Israel will be the third *party* with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, <sup>25</sup> whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance."

Saving Faith is belief that when God speaks, He has the determination and power to bring it to pass. Closer to home....Our reason says we must make up for our sin with righteousness. That every lie must be balanced with the truth until truth finally tips the

scale. This is the human way! God's way is for us to trust Him to justify us apart from our works. In His mercy He sent Jesus Christ to live a sinless life that He gives to you when you trust and believe Him. These things simply do not pass the human reason test and are therefore rejected in favor of religious rituals and good works. BUT...God justifies [saves] us through Faith Alone in Christ Alone!

Abraham looked at the circumstances and concluded that having a single child...never mind a host of descendants greater than the stars of the universe, was a physical impossibility. BUT...he did **not** disbelieve God. It is good to see the hopelessness of circumstances apart from God. The Disciples had to do this as well. They, like all Jews believed that wealth was a sign of God's favor and coupled with Law Keeping... nearly guaranteed salvation. After listening to Jesus speak to the Rich Young Ruler, Jesus said to them...

**Matthew 19:23-26** <sup>23</sup> ..... "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup> "Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." <sup>25</sup> When the disciples heard *this*, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" <sup>26</sup> And looking at *them* Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Salvation is not possible with men! Their best efforts and finest moral strivings will never succeed. Like having a baby at 100 years of age...it just can't happen in the world we know. Saving Faith considers God so trustworthy and sovereignly powerful that we will receive this gift from Him apart from ourselves or our good works.

## **He believed God had Power to keep His promise [20-21]**

**With respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief [20a]:** This promise was difficult to believe. The Promise...again...was "an heir through whom a mighty nation would come." Millions of people from this one childless and aged couple! That was the promise. The child would come from Abraham's own body. But didn't Abraham waver when he said...

**Genesis 15:2-3** <sup>2</sup> ....., "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" <sup>3</sup> And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir."

"Abraham openly admitted before God that he could not understand how the divine promise of an heir, much less of a multitude of nations, could be fulfilled. The only heir he could see was his chief servant, Eliezer, who would have received Abraham's inheritance had no son been born to him by Sarah. But struggling faith is not doubt, just as temptation to sin is not itself sin. The very fact that Abraham was trying to understand how God's promise could be fulfilled indicates he was looking for a way of fulfillment, although he could not yet see a way. Weaker faith might have simply succumbed to doubt. Sincere struggling with spiritual problems comes from strong, godly faith. Such faith refuses to doubt and trusts in God's promises even when no way of fulfillment is humanly imaginable." *John MacArthur Jr.*

What about Hagar and Ishmael? Certainly that was wavering in faith right? NOT REALLY! God had promised a physical child from Abraham not Sarah. This is struggling with faith not unbelief. Listen to the narrative....

**Genesis 16:1-2** Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no *children*, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. <sup>2</sup> So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing *children*. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

If Sarah had disbelieved the promise she would have never done something like this...right? She would have dismissed it all as just "CRAZY!" Instead she hatched a scheme to help God fulfill His Word to them! This actually shows that they did believe God, but lacked the patience to wait for Him to act. Have you ever grown impatient for God to act...to help you? I rest my case!

**But grew strong in faith [20b]:** Many translations fails to catch the deeper meaning here. Again the NIV seems to get this right when they translate....

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 4:20** Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but **was strengthened** in his faith and gave glory to God,

"**Grew strong**" is a passive verb. Simply put "he was made strong!" There was someone making Abraham strong.

"The Greek may be understood as "he was strengthened in his faith" (his faith grew stronger), or "he was strengthened through his faith." Either way it was God who gave the strength. Throughout this passage Paul is concerned to emphasize the importance of faith. Abraham had nothing going for him except the promise of God, but for the man of faith that was enough." *Leon Morris*

God's testing of His children's faith is designed to strengthen their trust, and they should thank Him for it, hard as it seems to be at the time. When Abraham was tested by God, he grew strong in faith." *John MacArthur Jr.*

You also are not alone with your faith...your weak, wavering faith! It is alright to pray for faith. For the ability to trust God beyond what the circumstances would allow. A father once brought his demon possessed son to Jesus.

**Mark 9:21-24** <sup>21</sup> And *Jesus* asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. <sup>22</sup> "It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" <sup>23</sup> And Jesus said to him, "If You can?" All things are possible to him who believes." <sup>24</sup> Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief."

Satan would prefer us to stay away from the gospel telling ourselves we have weak faith and it will always be weak. That is not true! If God did everything you asked Him or kept all trials from you, you would not be walking by faith, but by sight. Those who walk by faith exalt God and put Him on display as one who is faithful. They are saying to creation..."He is worthy to be trusted by me!"

**Giving glory to God, [20c]:** How do mere men make God glorious? Well...in truth we cannot! What we can do is declare to a watching creation that we consider God so worthy that we entrust our very lives and future to Him.

“I believe the glory of God is the going public of his infinite worth. I define the holiness of God as the infinite value of God, the infinite intrinsic worth of God. And when that goes public in creation, the heavens are telling the glory of God, and human beings are manifesting his glory, because we're created in his image, and we're trusting his promises so that we make him look gloriously trustworthy.” *John Piper*

“Giving glory to God means ascribing to God what is due to him...It is of course, impossible to increase God's glory; “giving glory to God” means recognizing the glory he has and taking the place appropriate to the creature over against the Creator.” *Leon Morris*

Of the faithless it is said...even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. **Romans 1:21**

Let me try to help you give glory to God when circumstances are difficult. “Dear Lord. I am weak in faith because I am made of dust, but I do love you and trust you. Help me trust you more. How gracious and merciful you have been to me! You are worthy of my trust. Strengthen me to trust you more!

**Being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. [21]:** This clarifies how God's strengthened Abraham so that he might give glory to God. “Assured” means persuaded of convinced.” This is God's spiritual work to do. You do not need to wallow in doubt! Does God love me? Did I do something wrong that He cannot forgive? Why is life just a series of difficulties? Being fully persuaded of God's promises keeping power requires **Time spent in the shadow of the Cross. There you are reminded that....**

- God has proven His love to you already. He knew you by name and loved you before He even created the world.

**Ephesians 1:4-5** <sup>4</sup> .... He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

- There was never any chance that you would not come to faith. It was your destiny!

**Ephesians 1:5** <sup>5</sup> He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

- He sent Christ at the appointed time to die for your sins on the Cross. He was dying for you on the cross....

**Galatians 4:4-6** <sup>4</sup> But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, <sup>5</sup> so that He might redeem those who were under the

Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup> Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

Can't you give glory to a God like this? Can you rest in your circumstance because you are in the His hands?

### **He believed God has Power to save men. [22-25]**

**Therefore IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. [22]:** This was faith in the person of God and not the Law or ritual. Paul is not trashing the Law or things done to worship God, but insisting that these things DO NOT SAVE. Those who believe they do, remain lost because they have not trusted in God alone.

**Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, [23]:** 2500 hundred years ago God saved Abraham by faith. That is God's way, because men are incapable of saving themselves through any means in creation. It was written down in the first book of the Bible for subsequent peoples in ages to come. That they may know that it has always been this way with God. He is gracious. He is merciful and He is powerful to act on behalf of those who will trust Him with their lives and eternal souls.

**But for our sake also, to whom it will be credited [24a]:** This means you! Nothing has changed about how men are saved. It is by trusting in the Word of God. For Abraham it was a glimpse of the future Messiah. BUT the saving faith was the same for him as it is for you.

**Galatians 3:6-9** <sup>6</sup> .... Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. <sup>7</sup> Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. <sup>8</sup> The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU." <sup>9</sup> So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

**As those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, [24b]:** Now here God connects your faith with Abraham's. There are several clear parallels beginning with the object of your faith. It is God! Our faith is in God and not in the resurrection. This does not mean you don't have to believe in the resurrection! It means that believing that without putting your lives in the hands of the God of Creation is a dead faith. Churches are filled on Easter Sunday with people professing to believe the resurrection who do not trust God or give Him glory.

Abraham trusted God to give life when it was humanly impossible. 100 year old men and women do not have a baby. And men who have been dead for three days do not suddenly pass through their grave clothes and a stone tomb and live. Faith that saves is in God, who does what men cannot do.

Abraham received his eternal life and justification as a gift from God. Like you and me it is apart from our righteousness, our religion, our good deeds. We have eternal life because God gave His Son to die for our sins and then proved that everything Christ did and said was absolutely true, by raising Him from the dead.

**Romans 1:1-4** Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called *as* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup> which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup> who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

***He who was delivered over because of our transgressions [25a]:*** In this last verse of the chapter God brings that black and white glimpse of the gospel into sharp, full color focus with brilliant contrast. It is no longer an heir of Abraham, but the man Jesus Christ. This is that Messiah Isaiah had revealed

**Isaiah 53:10** <sup>10</sup> But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief; If He would render Himself *as* a guilt offering, [death] He will see *His* offspring, He will prolong *His* days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. [resurrection]

**And was raised *for* of our justification. [25]:** *Charles Hodge* wrote..."As it was necessary that the high priest, under the old economy, should not only slay the victim at the altar, but carry the blood into the most holy place, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat; so it was necessary not only that our great High Priest should suffer in the outer court, but that he should pass into heaven to present his righteousness before God for our justification."

**CONCLUSION:** If you trust in doctrines, membership or even a sinner's prayer you will always wonder about your sincerity or if you missed something, because you are trusting in yourself and what you have done or are able to do...believe, join, pray!

When you trust in Christ Alone it is off you. It is on Him who leaves nothing undone and is infinitely worthy to take your sin and give you His righteousness.

**1 Peter 1:18-25** <sup>18</sup> knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, <sup>19</sup> but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ. <sup>20</sup> For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you <sup>21</sup> who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. <sup>22</sup> Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, <sup>23</sup> for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God. <sup>24</sup> For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, <sup>25</sup> BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you.