

Romans 4:17-25

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[0 : 00] We're in Romans chapter 4, if you guys want to flip there. This is your first time here.

We are studying and going through the book of Romans.! Romans chapter 4, our text this morning is verse 18 through 25.

Read along with me. In hope he believed against hope, he being Abraham, 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 100 years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust 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.

That is why his 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.

[1 : 36] When I was a kid, we used to get a magazine called Ranger Rick. I don't know if you guys have ever seen this. In it were stories about animals, nature, weather, you know, stuff that kids thought were cool before video games came out.

My favorite part of the magazine was found on the last couple pages. One of the, it always had a picture drawn, tree or garden or whatever, house.

And in that picture drawn were hidden things. And your job was to find those hidden objects, circle them, mark them off the list, and then go into the back of the magazine and check and see if you got it right. The other favorite of mine was the snapshot pictures.

They would take a picture of something really, really, really close up, like a beehive or a rug or a cracker, and your job was to guess what that object was.

Now, the problem was that that object was not in the environment that it normally is in. So you had no other clue except what you were seeing, what that object was.

[2 : 41] And you could go to the back of the book and cheat if you wanted to. You could try to figure it out. And even as a kid, I would know exactly what the answer was and I still didn't see it.

I couldn't get it. The problem was that you're given such a small look at this object that you couldn't put it into the environment on purpose, of course.

It's a problem to solve as a kid. And you would need help. I'm afraid that our theology has the same problem. Our view of God is so limited by what we can see or sometimes even feel.

That's another whole subject we talk about later. Our view is so limited because we don't learn about God.

We don't spend time with God. We don't trust Him more. That we get these little snapshots. Little blown, zoomed in pictures.

[3 : 48] And so when a struggle comes, and it will, when we lose a job or lose a loved one or fail a class, whatever it is, we give up.

And we try to solve the problem ourselves instead of trusting the one who is faithful, the one who we can put our hope in, who will never leave us or forsake us.

We give up because all we see is this tiny picture that we can't make out what it is. We have this one characteristic of God. One thing that God, that we know about Him, and that's it.

And the life of Abraham, specifically two events can show us this in the writings of Scripture, can give life to words this morning.

Paul clearly in Romans chapter 2 is using the life of Abraham to make his argument. So quickly I'm going to kind of review the life of Abraham for us.

[4 : 54] Abraham was an idolatrous. We kind of got a review this morning. I didn't know Nathan was going to do that. So I'll just add to it. Abraham was an idolatrous pagan man who lived in the land of Ur of the Chaldeans.

So pagan, idolatrous guy did not know God. And God picks Abraham, and at the time his name was Abram, and calls him out and says, pack up and go.

Doesn't tell him where. And just like that, Abraham gets, Abram gets up and he goes. Abram, whose name means father of many, is what his name means, which is a good example of God's sovereignty and his providence, using things to work for his good.

Abram's name meaning father of many. Abram was given a promise that God, from God, that he would be the father of many nations, all without having a child of his own.

The constant reminder of his name, and the lack of not having a child, led Abram to follow his wife's advice, and take a child from, or with Hagar, who was Sarah's, his wife's servant.

[6 : 23] Doubt and despair crept in, and sin was the result. Well, I don't have a child, so I'm going to go this route. God hasn't come through, so I'm going to go this route.

Because Abram at that moment did not have a kingdom view, did not have a big God view. He had a small God view. He didn't necessarily believe God.

Time had gone. Years had passed. It took 40 years for the promise to be fulfilled. God made good on his promise to Abraham by giving him a son, Isaac.

When, as Paul says in our text, Abraham was as good as dead, since he was about a hundred years old. Or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

See, God was preparing Abraham. Abraham. Preparing Abraham to, giving him this kingdom view, revealing himself to him. So that when, when the time came for Abraham to take Isaac up onto the mountain and sacrifice his only son, he did it because he knew that God was faithful.

[7 : 38] He knew that God would fulfill his promise. We read last week, Hebrews 11, about Abraham. It says, By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac.

And he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, Through Isaac shall your offspring be named. So, the very son that the promise was going to come through, Abraham believed God, had a big picture of God, and offered up Isaac as a sacrifice.

He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. So God knew, or Abraham knew, who God was.

God had worked in his life and revealed himself to Abraham so he could trust in the God who is faithful. Abraham was faithful. He was faithful because he had a big picture of who God is.

Faith is not a step into the unknown. We joke around about the Indiana Jones Temple of Doom, have you guys seen it? Where Indiana Jones has to step out into the void and picture is that's faith.

[9 : 00] Well, that's not faith. Faith isn't just jumping out into something we don't know. It is complete confidence in the God who issues the command or promise.

Faith is not full understanding, but full trust. And Abraham trusted God. Didn't understand why he was going to sacrifice his son, but he trusted God.

See, some of us in this room will pray, God, increase or strengthen my faith. My question to you is, why are you praying that?

Is it for more understanding, which isn't faith at all, it's just knowledge? More understanding of life, or is it the ability to trust him more because he is Lord?

That is faith. Abraham is celebrated because of his faith, and that faith came from God, and God revealing himself to Abraham through his 40 years of waiting.

[10 : 09] This morning, there's two points. Next week, there'll be two points from this same text. Your view of God determines how you live.

Your view of God, big view, little view, your view of God determines how you live, and it determines what you believe. Two simple points this morning.

So are you looking at a small, tiny picture, a zoomed-in picture of who God is? Or are you looking at a much bigger, broader picture that you can take comfort in and find joy in?

That's the question this morning. As I studied this week and as I prepared, it became more and more clear to me that there's a lot of information that I think is good to share with you.

So this text, we'll cover again next week with two more points. So let's dig in. Your view of God determines how you live.

[11:12] Your view of God determines how you live. So your actions are determined by your view of God. This is found in verse 18 and 19. It says, 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 100 years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

In hope he believed against hope. The New American Standard says, In hope against hope he believed. The New King James Version says, Who against hope believed in hope.

Paul in this statement puts hope against hope. What in the world does this mean? It's very poetic. It sounds really good, but what is he trying to say? In verse 17, he's just finished saying that Abraham believed in God who gives life to dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

[12:28] Okay? So that's kind of where we're coming from. And now Paul wages hope against hope. What we have here is two different types of hope. Okay?

A better way to say that is that the object of the hope changes. Okay? So follow me. In our text from the ESV, it says, In hope, he believed against hope.

Well, this first hope, in hope, is God's hope. It's hope that is in God alone. This hope never changes. It is constant. And it works outside of our understanding. So, we, as human beings, have a limited understanding of who God is.

We have gravity. We have these rules that we have to follow. And God doesn't necessarily have to follow those same rules. We're all going to die. God does not work that way.

[13:35] It definitely doesn't work the way we want them to. Or the way that nature or reason says to. If we were to take a logical view, a logical view at the life of Abraham and some other stories through Scripture, nothing happened that was logical.

Logic and reason says it is impossible for Abraham and Sarah to have a child. 99 years old and she was barren.

Logic and reason says there's no hope for a son. So, what does Abraham and Sarah do? Sarah says, here's my servant Hagar. Have a child. His name will be Ishmael.

The rest is history. Logic and reason says it is impossible to walk on dry ground in the middle of the Red Sea. I agree.

But God doesn't work within our limited understanding. Logic and reason says that no one person can live a perfect, sinless life.

[14:50] But He did. Christ did. Logic and reason says that no one person dies for the sins of the world. Logic and reason is right, but Christ did.

Logic and reason says that no one can resurrect from being dead three days. But He did. All of this happened.

Now, I am not preaching against logic and reason. It has its place. There are times and places for it. Just ask Paul.

We are in the midst of a logical argument that Paul is laying out through Romans. What I am trying to communicate is that God does not always act within our logic and reason.

See, here is the problem. You can use logic and reason to prove God, but you can also use logic and reason to disprove God. As far as I am concerned, those two counter each other and knock each other out.

[15:59] God does not work inside our little box of understanding. And in Abraham's case, in hope, he believed against hope.

So this is against hope. This is man's hope. This is our hope. This is our understanding. Our minute minds can only grasp certain things with certain limitations.

As I have already pointed out, from our standpoint, from our vantage point, there is no way that Abraham has a child. And yet, Matthew 19, it says, with man, this is impossible.

Speaking of the camel going through the eye of the needle. With man, this is impossible. With God, all things are possible. And right before that, Jesus is talking about the rich man entering heaven.

All things are possible. The question is, do you have hope that is counter-cultural? Do you have hope that is the antithesis to logic and reason?

[17:09] Or is your hope still limited by your little box? because when logic and reason no longer exists or solves your problem or makes a solution, what do you have left?

What do you have left when logic and reason are gone? Do you have faith to hope against hope or does God no longer exist to you? And you can probably think of people who have left the church or stopped attending or stopped being a Christian or whatever the case may be because logic and reason ended.

God told Abraham he would be the father of many nations. It took 40 years from the first promise. And in God's perfect timing, 40 years, Abraham hoped against hope.

See what Paul does here is he measures God's given hope, he measures God's hope with man's hope. And if you're going to measure the two, God's hope is going to win every time because with God, all things are possible.

Don't limit your view of God by putting Him in your little box of understanding that you open up once a week when you attend church or when you hang out with your friends who are nice and good and Christians.

[18 : 53] Don't do it. God is much bigger and greater than that. Reason and logic are good, but God created us and gave us brains to use it, but faith is more than arguments and statistics.

Faith is confidence in the Creator who, as we've seen, defied death and defeated sin against all logic through Jesus Christ.

So look at verse 19. 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.

If you're like me, and hopefully you're not, but if you are like me, you probably chuckled a little the first time you read this. I kind of snickered and chuckled a little bit.

Paul's a funny guy. Abraham was nearly dead. That's pretty funny. See, in our time, that's a joke. That's an insult, something.

[20 : 05] And when we read scripture, we tend to read in and kind of put our emotions and our views with the text, our feelings and our perspective.

But in this case, Paul is not insulting Abraham. He's not making a joke about Abraham. He's using Abraham's life to make a point. Abraham's life to Abraham's life to be away.

He's way past having kids. And Sarah was barren. Or in the Greek, her womb was dead. Yet, he did not weaken in faith.

Abraham's faith was rooted in the truth of God, and he had a large view, a big view of God. and his life showed it. That's why he's in Hebrews 11, the faith hall of fame, if that's what you want to call it. He didn't weaken in faith because what verse 17 says, look at it, says of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead, the Greek says that Sarah's womb was dead, and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

[21 : 25] Isaac did not exist. Abraham believed this God. And both Abraham witnessed firsthand and both God used to strengthen Abraham and not weaken his faith.

So if we have a big God view, if we have a perspective of God and try not to limit God and say, okay, God, you're greater than this, you're greater than what I can see, we will live different lives. We will not be weak, but we will be strong in our faith. God's love love love and love love! God's need love and love and love and love! God's view of view of view of view of Our actions more than likely are going to be God-honoring and God-pleasing and Christ-exalting, no matter the situation, no matter the suffering, no matter what we are dealing with.

So question, do you think our brothers in India or Iran or China or North Korea, being beaten for proclaiming Christ, have a big God-view or a small God-view?

See, the American church is filled with small God-view Christians. And I'll be honest with you, and I know Nathan will be honest with you, we refuse to be one and refuse to teach you to be one.

[23 : 12] We serve a big God, King of kings, Lord of lords, who is worthy of all praise. The rocks cry out to Him for crying out loud. He has given us His Word, and through it, our story after story of God doing unreal, unbelievable things.

And let's be honest, things that are not logical. So let's pray in your life, and in my life, and here at Christ Family Church, that God would do something illogical.

Something outside of our understanding for His glory and our good. Hear me clearly.

It's not about what God can do for you. Let's not pray that. It's not about what God can do for you, what He can provide for you. It is about what He has already done, and what you do in light of that.

And all that, that comes from a big God view. That comes from seeing God, seeing the big picture, learning about Him, reading His Word, loving, spending time with Him.

[24 : 35] So not only does your view of God determine how you live, but it also determines what you believe. Verse 20 and 21 says, No distrust 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. Now, Abraham, from a world's perspective, had every reason to doubt God. Every reason to waver in his faith and in his belief. But he didn't. Because Abraham had a big God view, and the result was his belief in God.

Specifically, his faith was strengthened. We just read that in our text. Our view of God determines what we believe. It's like the thermostat of our beliefs.

Thermostat controls the air temperature in a room. It doesn't take the temperature. It controls the temperature. Likewise, our view of God controls what we actually believe about God.

[25 : 50] So if you have a small view of God, if you think that God is limited, follow me here. Then your beliefs about Scripture, your beliefs about Jesus, your beliefs about sin are affected, and a lot of times end up unbiblical.

Back to the text. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God.

Now, we can rejoice in this. Abraham was human. He wasn't superhuman. He wasn't this incredible, faithful guy. He was faithful because God made him faithful.

Which means that Abraham being human, like you and like me, there were times of doubt in his life. There were times of anxiousness. Hagar is a good example. But none of that, none of those emotions or feelings, it says, made him waver.

[26 : 56] No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God. Abraham secured himself to who God is. He gave in to sin.

That inner struggle, that battle that wages on in all of us, was overcome by the promise of God. Abraham's view of a big God.

Now, this inner struggle, it says, no distrust made him waver. Remember, the Greek word means to be divided in one's own mind. To be divided. Abraham was not divided.

There was a conversation inside his head. I'm sure, if he's human, there had to be. Do we do this? Do we not? Do we do this? Do we not? But he never wavered. He never turned from the promise of God.

With a small view of God, with a little picture of who God is, there would be wavering and a divided mind. Because there's no foundation.

[28 : 04] There's no truth. To talk you off the ledge of despair and hopelessness. There was no wavering.

It says, instead, he grew strong in his faith. This grew strong is like a muscle grows stronger with strain and with weight, constantly working those muscles.

Faith is strengthened by those strains and struggles within and from without. So, you go through a hard time and God gives you a promise and you trust him, your faith is strengthened.

You don't trust him, but God works that out. Your faith is strengthened. Abraham's faith was strengthened through his life.

Now, if question number two of the Logos questions is, why did God make you? It's from the Westminster Confession of Faith. And the answer is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

[29 : 11] While we were created, God made us to glorify him and enjoy him forever. If that's the reason God made us, then we should look around and see how we can glorify God.

How can we bring God honor and glory? If that's what we were created to do. Well, in our text, we have an example of that.

Look at it. Verse 20. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God.

But he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God. Finish it out. Fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

Abraham glorified God because of who he was, God, and what he was going to do. God. Verse 21. He was fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

[30 : 21] Can you say that about your life? Can you say that you're fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised? I hope you can. This verse, verse 21, is the epitome of having a big view of God.

This epitomizes what it means to believe in God. Abraham was fully convinced. No room for anything else.

He was fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. In other words, God does what he says he's going to do. God has the power.

The inner struggle, the battle that wages on in all of us was overcome by the promise of God. God does what he promises.

How could he do less and still be God? Think about that. How could God do less and still be God? This verse 21, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised, is the root of what our view should be of God.

[31 : 41] Fully convinced. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what it looks like in the end. God is going to fulfill his promises. Have you guys read Revelation? There's a lot of illogical things in that book.

It doesn't matter. God is going to fulfill what he says he's going to fulfill. He's going to do what he says he's going to do. We should be fully convinced that what we read in Scripture is true.

That what he says will happen. We should never ask the question, will God? If it says he will, he will. But we do ask that when we choose logic and reason over what Scripture says.

When we choose and say there's no way that the earth was created in so and so six days. There's no way. Illogical.

Scripture says that we have to believe it. Will Jesus come back for his bride, the church?

[32 : 53] Yes. Will Jesus destroy the enemy? Yes. Will our bodies be perfected? Yes. Will sin be destroyed? Yes.

Will God keep his promises? Yes. Is hell a real place? Yes. Will people who do not know Jesus be sent to hell? Yes. Is heaven a real place?

Yes. All are promises, spoken words of God from his word. How about a personal side? Will God hear my prayers? Yes.

If you're a child of God, he will hear your prayers. Will God answer my prayers? Yes. If you pray in his will. Does God judge me for my sin? No.

If you're a believer, Christ has already been judged for your sin. Am I accepted by the Father? Yes. You have been adopted because of Christ. Does God love some people more than me?

[33 : 50] No. Can God love me any less? No. Can God love me any more? Absolutely not.

Absolutely not. Can we believe the entire Bible? Yes. We must. We must have a big view of God. Not so that we can do things better or have nicer things or be a better speaker or be more popular. But so we can bring the most glory to God. So that our faith can be strengthened like Abraham. And so our actions proclaim the goodness of God instead of our actions proclaiming our unbelief and insecurities.

Jesus Christ lived an illogical life. How can a man be 100% human and 100% God?

The math doesn't work. Illogical. But he was. How can he live a perfect, sinless life? Seems impossible to me.

[35 : 00] But he did. Why would he die for the sins of a people who crucified him? I don't know. I wouldn't.

But he did. How does his death and resurrection affect you? Illogical. Because without Christ, everything is logical.

Without Christ, you're a sinner and you deserve hell and that's where you're going. You're a sinner created, born into it. It's logical.

You can do nothing that is God honoring without Christ. Logical. You are guilty for the sin that you commit, that you live and breathe. Logical.

Without Christ, there is no hope. Logical. But. While you were dead in sin, Christ died for you.

[35 : 59] Which means. He took on the sin of you and me and the world. The wrath and punishment that we deserve was all put on him. Illogical. He died a gruesome death.

Three days later, rose from the grave. Illogical. This act. Being resurrected, defeated death and sin. Which means. Because of Christ, we have a living hope. That we can live with him forever. We can cling to a promise. To come. Next week.

Next year. Forty years from now. It does not matter. Because he is faithful. And we can have complete confidence. Fully convinced.

If you do not know Christ, you must repent. And believe in Jesus Christ. Not reasonable.

[37 : 00] No reason. Not logical. But in the illogical. God is most glorified in the illogical. Because only he can do it.

Only he can do the illogical. Pray with me. Father, I thank you for your word.

God. I pray that you are pleased. Plead with you that. That hearts. Were touched by your spirit.

That you used the word spoken this morning. And thank you, God, that you don't work in my limited understanding of you. That you are so much greater.

So much bigger. So much more than what I can imagine up. Create in my mind. God. I thank you, God, that you had the foresight to create what you've created.

[38 : 10] This earth. And this land. And just everything that we see has been created by you. God, we thank you for it. I thank you for Christ.

That you had a plan A for mankind. That you were willing to sacrifice a life for many.

I thank you that life sacrificed was also raised from the dead so that we can have life. God, I pray that Christ is exalted by not just our listening here.

Not just your word being preached. But our actions leaving this place. And God, as we get ready to worship and celebrate what Christ has done by partaking of the Lord's Supper.

I pray that you're honored by our hearts and our intentions. And God, as we move from that to worshiping in song. I pray that we worship with pure hearts.

[39 : 23] Worship in truth. Celebrate what you have done for your people. Your grace overwhelms me.

Your mercy blows me away. And you show it day after day after day. To you be glory and honor. In Jesus' name.

Amen.