

“Abraham, the Father of Believers”
(Romans 4:16-25 – Pentecost 3 – June 14, 2026)

Romans 4:16-25 – ¹⁶*Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all* ¹⁷*(as it is written, “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him whom he believed – God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;* ¹⁸*who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, “So shall your descendants be.”* ¹⁹*And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb.* ²⁰*He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,* ²¹*and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.* ²²*And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness.”* ²³*Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him,* ²⁴*but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,* ²⁵*who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.*

Dear Redeemed in Jesus Christ:

We are told that Abraham, “*contrary to hope, in hope believed*” (vs. 18). He believed God’s promise that he would become a great nation, “*a father of many nations*” (vs. 17). It was a promise centered in Christ, the Seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:16) who was to come through Israel, the Savior of sinners in whom all nations are blessed. Abraham and Sarah were old and without child. Yet just when all hope might have seemed dead, Abraham had a living hope. Why? He believed the unfailing Word and promises of God in Christ.

In this sense Abraham is called “*the father of us all*” (vs. 16), the father of all believers. Even when all hope may seem lost, when all we can see is our own sin and death, like Abraham our faith clings to God’s Word and promises in Christ, and we have a living hope. For in His Word God declares us forgiven in Christ, and heirs with Abraham and all believers of the resurrection to eternal life and heavenly glory to come.

Let us consider how we share the faith of “**Abraham, the Father of Believers.**” For with Abraham, **1) Contrary to hope, in hope we believe God’s power and promise,** and **2) Through faith, we receive all the blessings Christ won for us.**

1) Contrary to hope, in hope we believe God’s power and promise

God had called Abraham at age 75 to leave behind his fatherland and move to Canaan. There He promised to make him into a great nation (Genesis 12:1-4). He told Abraham:

“‘Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’” It says Abraham “*believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness*” (Genesis 15:5-6). But now a quarter century had passed, and Abraham and Sarah were just as barren and childless as ever. Where was this offspring through whom all the nations would be blessed? How could the Savior of sinners come if they were still without the child of promise?

Yet contrary to hope, in hope Abraham believed. The more hopeless things looked to human reason, the more he had to rely only on God’s Word and promises. “*And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform*” (vs. 19-21).

While Abraham is held up as a great example of faith, it is not saying he was perfect. He believed God would provide the needed son, though at times he wondered how it would come about. Once he reasoned with God: “Just give me a son through my servant Eliezer” (Genesis 15:2-3). Another time, he listened to Sarah’s advice and resorted to having a son with her servant Hagar (Genesis 16:2). That sinful human arrangement only messed things up, leading to envy and strife in the home! Yet God continued to assure Abraham: “No, the child of promise will be born to you and your wife Sarah.”

When life’s great plans seem to run into a dead end, when God’s promises seem delayed beyond hope, how often do we try to work it out in a way that makes sense to our human reason, instead of trusting His Word? When God’s Word says, “Honor your father and your mother,” have we thought instead we should be able to do our own thing in our own time and disobeyed godly authority? When God’s Word says, “Wait for My time in marriage,” have we resorted to our own time, satisfying the flesh with impure desires? When God’s Word says, “Wait for My time and way to work things out in this difficult relationship,” have we resorted to making things right by our own might, seeking to get even by harmful words or deeds? When God’s Word says, “Trust Me to help you with this difficult job or assignment,” have we resorted to taking the easy way by laziness or cheating? As sinners, we often try to be in control of our lives our own way, instead of letting God be in control for our good; but the more we try, the more we mess things up.

When we fail to trust the Word of God and act in faith on what He says, we follow our own reason and satisfy the flesh in sin. This is what even the apostle Paul lamented. Though he knew that what the Law of God said is good, and according to the Spirit he wanted to obey it in perfect trust, he saw how he kept falling into temptation and sinning according to the flesh. He confessed his helplessness as a sinner; yet in faith he confessed his hope in his Savior: “*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!*” (Romans 7:24-25).

We share the faith of Abraham, Paul, and believers through the ages. It is faith, not in anything we do but in what God promises and does for us in Christ. Like Abraham, we could do nothing to help provide for ourselves a Savior from sin, any more than he could do anything out of his own dying body. Like Paul, we can do nothing to help provide for our salvation, even by our best efforts in our bodies of sin and death. Yet contrary to hope, we believe the power and promises of God in Christ. When all looks hopeless, when all we can see is our own sin and death, in hope we believe that God has done everything to save us by His Son of promise, Jesus Christ the Savior of sinners.

God continued to repeat His promise to Abraham, and by that promise Abraham's faith continued to be strengthened. At last, in God's time and way, what He promised He faithfully gave. When Abraham was 100 and Sarah 90, by God's miracle Isaac was born! Later, when God tested Abraham's faith by asking him to sacrifice his only son, Abraham was ready to do so, believing God could even raise Isaac from the dead to bring about His promise (Hebrews 11:17-19). Abraham trusted in *"God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did"* (vs. 17). He believed God's power and promise that He could replace sin and death, not only with physical life but with spiritual and eternal life in Christ. So that, as Jesus later told the Jews in John 8:56: *"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."*

2) Through faith, we receive all the blessings Christ won for us

Like Abraham and all believers through time, God has called us out of the hopelessness of unbelief and death to a life of faith and eternal hope in Christ. As God at Creation called those things which did not exist into being by His powerful Word, so He has spoken His Gospel of forgiveness and salvation in Christ to us, creating faith and life in our hearts. What His Gospel promises, it powerfully gives (Romans 1:16).

Now through God's gift of faith, we are receiving all the blessings Christ won for us. As it says, Abraham believed: *"And therefore 'it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification"* (vs. 22-25).

What we sinners were powerless to do, the holy God has powerfully done to save us. In the fulness of time, He sent His Son into our flesh as the miracle Offspring of Abraham. The eternally begotten Son of God was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary as the Son of Man. What was impossible for sinful man, the holy Son has worked out for our salvation.

Jesus lived the perfect life of righteousness God's Law demanded, the life we sinners could not live. As our Substitute under the Law, Jesus always trusted His Father and obeyed His Word. This is the perfect life God now counts to us for our righteousness.

Jesus also gave His life for all our offenses, all the ways we have failed to trust God's Word and done things our own way. God's Law demanded justice and death for our sin. There was nothing we could do to get rid of our guilt and condemnation. But on the cross, God punished His innocent Son instead of us. When Jesus cried out, "*It is finished!*" (John 19:30) and committed His spirit into His Father's hands (Luke 23:46), He had finished paying for all our sins and the sins of the world, satisfying the justice of God.

He "*was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.*" Jesus' resurrection powerfully demonstrates that God has fulfilled all His promises to us. At the cross, God has taken away all our sins and forgiven them. In their place, He counts His own Son's righteousness to us! Therefore, contrary to hope, in hope we believe. When all we can see are ways we have sinned and messed things up in life, when our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts (1 John 3:20). Like Abraham, He turns us in faith to His Word and promises in Christ. There, He declares us forgiven and free of condemnation, cleansed and holy in His sight. There, He strengthens our faith.

Jesus' resurrection powerfully demonstrates that He has conquered death for us. In its place, He gives us the gift of eternal life. Therefore, contrary to hope, in hope we believe. When all we can feel is our mortal bodies, when we fear death and the grave, God turns us again to His Word and promises in Christ and gives us a living hope. There, He declares us alive in His risen Son, alive by His Spirit and faith; and thus, with Abraham and all who believe, we are heirs of the resurrection to eternal life.

Jesus' resurrection also powerfully guarantees His daily care for us. When all we can see and feel are the troubles of life, when God's great plans seem hidden under the cross, God turns our faith to His Word and promises in Christ. There, He assures us that He is hearing our prayers and working all things together for our good; and that our present sufferings are not worth comparing to the eternal heavenly glory that awaits us (Romans 8:18, 28).

How good it is to know that God Himself, who has called us to saving faith, is in control of all things for our good. He has proven by the life, death, and resurrection of His Son that He is working out His gracious plan and purpose for us. Like Abraham, the father of believers, contrary to hope, in hope we cling to God's unfailing Word and promises; and through faith, we are receiving all the blessings Christ won for us!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.