

The Faith of Our Father

Introduction

Turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 4, if you're not already there. Today we come to a great object lesson for what Paul has been teaching the Roman Christians in the first three chapters so far. Here he turns to an earthly example to show the people what he has been trying to teach them. As we already know, Paul's goal is to show that people are justified on the basis of their faith, Romans 1:17 says **the righteous man lives by faith**. This faith is to the exclusion of good works, or following the Law. We are to see that the Law cannot be kept, and so our only hope is faith in God to save us from our sins. And today we come to the man from the OT who was most known for his faith. He is the father of all who are of faith, according to Romans 4:17. Through this man, God established faith as the prerequisite for righteousness. God is unchanging, and righteousness has been from the same source since Adam to the present day. But, faith was established for the entire world to see and know through one man, Abraham, and we will see, in fact this is why this event was recorded in Scripture, it was recorded for our sake, as Paul says in verse 24. Abraham is THE man of faith in the Bible. Through his example we see that righteousness is attained through faith. So, today we will delve into the life of this man of faith, the father of all who believe. We will see his faith realized, and then we will see the results of his faith, and how it changed his life. First, let's pray and ask God to bless our time in His holy word.

Pray

It's very important to remember the overall context of the passage that we are dealing with, and I've been emphasizing that throughout this study of Romans. Paul isn't just speaking of Abraham at this point in Romans because Abraham was a good man. So, we need to remember how we got to this point in our study to fully understand Abraham and his position as the "father of us all." Our key verse for the entire book, is Romans 1:16-17. We are probably all close to memorizing this by now. **For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith.** This passage is the entire reason Paul was writing to the Roman church. He wanted them to understand that salvation was by faith alone; faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. The Messiah who came to the earth, lived a perfect life in the flesh, freely gave Himself as the substitute for the sins of the world, who was crucified, died, was buried and rose again for the glory of God. Another key aspect to remember is that Paul is the Apostle to the gentiles. He was bringing the message of faith to the church. The church was a new concept in human history, it was a mystery not revealed in the OT. He brought the message of faith in Christ to a people who did not have the Law or the Scriptures, so it was critical that they had a correct understanding of the salvation that was made available to them through Christ. Man's natural tendency is to do something in order to be pleasing to God, or in the case of most gentile people at the time of Paul's writing; they tried to please the gods, plural. So, he wanted to make absolutely sure that they

understood that salvation was by faith alone, not from works of righteousness. The gentile people were not under the Law, they did not need to fulfill any requirements of the Law in order to be pleasing to the Lord. This made them different from the Jewish people, and in fact, this salvation in Christ brought about an entire new epoch in human history, so it was absolutely critical that God have a spokesman who knew the Word, and had a direct commissioning from God in order to proclaim this message. And, as we know, that man was Paul. His letters are for us, the gentile believers. His instructions are for this present age and the people who live in it under grace. What a privileged people we are to live in this time. We are after the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, so we have access to God and His throne like no other people have had in history before Christ. We have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside us, if we have placed our faith in Christ. We have the distinct honor of serving our Risen Savior with our lives. When we die, we will be brought directly into his presence. And, importantly, we have the entire Bible in the palm of our hand. We have an absolute abundance of Bibles. It is quite staggering actually. Our family has multiple copies of at least four different translations of the Bible in actual books. I have six different translations on my computer, and the same on my phone. And our family is not unusual, I would guess we all have at least the same amount in our homes. It is a tremendous blessing to live at this time in history. Paul's mission was to ensure that we gentile believers had a proper understanding of all these privileges, and his letters, kept for us in the Bible, do just that. So, in the beginning of chapter 1 we have the reason for the letter; righteousness comes by faith. The second half of chapter 1 describes the gentile people and how they had knowledge of God, but their foolish minds became darkened, and they denied God and worshipped the creature instead. As they got further and further from God, their acts became more and more depraved, as described in verses 26-32. If you think about it, this makes sense. The further away from God you get, the worse you act. The closer to God you get, the better you act. Then in chapter 2 we have a discussion about people who thought their good acts would outweigh their bad acts, and they will be fine with God. These people judge that the actions of others are worse than their own actions, so surely God won't judge them. They couldn't be anymore wrong. God will certainly judge their actions because they are wrong. It doesn't matter if someone else is worse than you. Sin is what separates you from God, whether it is a little or a lot of sin, it doesn't matter, if you have sin, and we all do, you are separated from God. Next, Paul showed how the Jewish people were guilty as well, because they could not follow the Law perfectly. In this we saw that being a Jew is really a matter of the heart, not physically doing things, like keeping the Sabbath holy or being circumcised. These are things the Jews were commanded to do because of their faith, not in order to have righteousness. Then, last time we saw the conclusion of the discussion of these three types of people, the pagan, the moralist and the religious person. The conclusion was that they are all guilty of sin, and nothing they do makes them pleasing to God. The only way to be pleasing to God is to have faith in Christ. This argument is summed up in 3:28, **For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.** And, finally we saw that the Law is established by faith. The Law should drive us to faith, because we should know that we can't live up to God's standard. So, now Paul turns his attention to an earthly example of a man of faith. Paul was a brilliant teacher of course, so he knows that real life examples help to cement ideas in people's minds. As we come to chapter 4 we see

that Paul will show that Abraham was righteous before he was circumcised, and before the Law was even given. The question of circumcision was a hot topic in the time of the beginning of the church. Since Jesus came from the Jewish people and His earthly ministry was primarily to the nation of Israel most of the early believers were Jewish. So, this New Covenant with Christ for the church was a radical departure from what they had known their entire lives. They also had viewed the gentile people as being completely heathen and basically unclean, and now some of these people were a part of the family of God. So, was the Law to be completely disregarded now? Do people have to be circumcised to be considered Christians? Can you eat whatever you want, or are the dietary restrictions of the Law still in effect? These are the doctrinal questions that theologians like Paul were dealing with in their time. Here in Romans is where Paul answered a lot of those questions. And, if his answer could be summed up in one word, that one word would be, faith. Now let's turn our attention to chapter 4, and the father of all who believe, Abraham.

Abraham's Righteousness

I hope you paid attention to our reading this morning because there is a lot in there. I won't take the time to reread it all, but just the main points I want you to see. Verse 1 says, **What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?** The first thing we need to see is that Abraham is the forefather of the Jews according to the flesh. He is their physical progenitor. Abraham was the father of Isaac, who was the father of Jacob, who was the father of the 12 sons who became the 12 tribes of Israel. Then in verses 2 and 3 we have the real question. **For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.** The Roman believers must have had the same question that a lot of people at this time had. Are people justified by their works in addition to believing in Jesus? Here we have the answer again from Paul, and it is a resounding, "No." Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. Abraham believed. Not, Abraham believed plus he was circumcised. Not, Abraham believed and did what God told him to do. Abraham just believed. Let's see what Paul is referring to, and for that of course, we need to go to the OT and the book of Genesis. Let's turn to Gen 15 and we will see where Abraham is credited with righteousness because of his faith. And, interwoven in this story is not just a promise to Abraham of a son, but also a land for this new nation to dwell in. We will look at the importance of that as well, as this promise of God is still in effect. So, here in the first few verses of Gen 15 we see God promise to give Abraham an heir. Abraham's name at this point in his life is still Abram, and Sarah's name is still Sarai, but for the sake of ease I'll just refer to them as Abraham and Sarah. Verse 1, **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."** 2 Abram said, "O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." 4 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. This is not the first time

that God had promised Abraham descendants, and that is why Abraham seems to be complaining to God, but God, I have no heir of my own, now it's just my servant, you haven't given me any children. This isn't the way Abraham was expecting it to go. We see back in chapter 12, when God first calls Abraham that He promises him descendants. In the beginning of chapter 12 God promised to make Abraham a great nation, and the great promise of verse 3 in chapter 12. **And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.** This is the promise to Abraham that the Messiah would come from his ancestors. But another thing we see in chapter 12 is that Abraham is 75 years old. It seems like Abraham is getting a little frustrated back in chapter 15, as several years have passed and he still does not have a descendant, and you really need at least one descendant to become a great nation. And he complains to the Lord about his heir being a servant, and not his own child. Then we see the Lord give Abraham an object lesson in verse 5 of chapter 15, **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.** One of the great privileges of being a pilot is seeing the stars at night. It truly is like no other view of the stars I have had. I've been on ships at sea in the night, and out in the wilderness at night, and have never seen anything like it is from the sky, above all the lights and clouds. It really is quite remarkable, as I'm sure it was on the night that the Lord took Abraham outside to look at the sky. There was no light pollution back then like there is today. So, the view must have been tremendous. Now, the Lord, the creator of all that they were looking at that night, tells him that if he could count the stars, that would be the number of his descendants. And, if you've ever seen the stars on a clear night, with nothing obstructing your view, you know that you can't count the stars. So, essentially, the Lord is saying that your descendants will be innumerable. Next, is our key verse for the day, verse 6. **Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.** Notice again, Abraham did nothing but believe in the Lord. He was not circumcised, the sign of circumcision had not been given, he had not followed the Law, the Law had not been given, he didn't read his Bible, the Bible didn't exist. He didn't go to church on Sunday; he didn't do anything but believe in the Lord. He believed the Lord would do what He said He would do. This brings to mind a couple of the miracles the Lord Jesus, the same one whom Abraham is meeting with here, performed in the book of Matthew. The first is in Matthew 8, and it entails a story of great faith as well. This is the centurion whose servant was paralyzed. The centurion, a Roman gentile, goes to the Lord after the Sermon on the Mount and asks Him to heal his servant. The Lord says, in Matthew 8:7 I will come and heal him. But the centurion replies with "**Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it.** Then it says that Jesus marveled at his faith. What an amazing statement that is. The centurion's faith made Jesus marvel! The Man who created the universe, who has lived forever, is the Savior of all mankind, marveled at his faith. I would love to make the Lord marvel at my faith, but I'm afraid that doesn't always happen. At any rate, the Lord goes on to say to those following in the crowd "**Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. 11 I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; 12**

but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” 13 And Jesus said to the centurion, “Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed. The last sentence of that is the key for today anyway, Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed. So, since you believed, it will be done for you. And, notice that Jesus says that people who have faith like this man will have a seat at the table in the Kingdom of Heaven. Now this is a whole other series of sermons here on the Kingdom of Heaven. Maybe we will have that at another time, but for today we can see that He is talking about a future event because He says, “many will come”, that is in the future tense. He is speaking of the Millennial Kingdom in which Jesus will rule and reign from His throne in Jerusalem, physically on the earth. Whenever you see Jesus speaking of the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew (he uses that term more than any other gospel writer), this is what He is referring to, the Millennial Kingdom. To gain entrance to the Millennial Kingdom one must be a child of God, and we see here that Jesus is saying that people of faith are the one’s who will be there, notice they will come from the east and the west, this means gentiles, just like this Roman centurion, they will come from the nations, not just physical descendants, whom he references in verse 12, by saying that the children of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. These are not people of faith, they were the disobedient Jews who Jesus dealt with throughout His ministry on earth, and those in the future who would not have faith in Him as their Messiah. The Millennial Kingdom is primarily for the nation of Israel, but it is for people of faith. That is getting off on a rabbit trail, but it is a very interesting trail though, but to get back on track; the centurion is commended by the Lord for his great faith, and the servant was healed at that very moment by the Lord. So, the centurion has faith that Jesus can do something for Him, and Jesus says it is done for him, just as he has believed.

We see another example of this in chapter 9 of Matthew. Now, these miracles that Jesus is performing after the Sermon on the Mount are significant. If you remember the Sermon is in chapters 5-7, and then Matthew immediately goes to several miracles that Jesus performed to show that He has the power to implement the things He talked about in the Sermon. He was talking about the Kingdom to come in the future, the Millennial Kingdom, in the Sermon on the Mount. The Jewish people knew a lot about this Kingdom from the OT scriptures, and they expected the Messiah to implement it when He came. And, now He is showing them through these miracles that He can rule and reign just like the OT promised that He would. Here in chapter 9 we come across 2 blind men of great faith. They cry out to the Lord in verse 27 **As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!** Notice they call Him the Son of David. This is because they know that the Son of David will be the one who rules over Israel in the Kingdom to come, and they ask for mercy because they know that He can help them. Then we have Jesus’s response to them **When He entered the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus *said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They *said to Him, “Yes, Lord.” 29 Then He touched their eyes, saying, “ It shall be done to you according to your faith.” 30 And their eyes were opened.** So, Jesus goes into their house and asks if they believe He can do this for them, and they say Yes Lord. And, once again, Jesus says, it shall be done **according to your faith.** They were healed because of their faith. They recognized Jesus as the Son of David, they recognized Him as their Lord, and they knew that He

could heal them, and Jesus responds with it will be done, according to your faith. Keep in mind that God is unchanging from the OT times to the NT times to now. So, God operated just the same for Abraham as He did for these people in Matthew. So, let's go back to Genesis 15 and look again at Abraham and his faith. Again, in verse 6 of Genesis 15 we see that Abraham believed God, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. Just like the centurion and the blind men who believed, Abraham believed God, he believed that God would do what He said He would and it was credited to him as righteousness. Then we see how this Millennial Kingdom that I was talking about is tied into all this. Verse 7 **And He said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.** He says, I will give you a land to possess, which He spells out the boundary for in verse 18, from the River in Egypt all the way to the Euphrates River. Israel has not possessed this land in its entirety. That means that they will possess it at some point in the future, because this is a solemn promise of Almighty God. Abraham asks for a sign from the Lord to show that He will make this happen, that He will give Abraham a nation, a real physical nation. So, the Lord does give him the sign, He tells Abraham to bring Him some animals for a sacrifice, to be part of the ceremony here in which the Lord will confirm His promise. So, in verse 10 of Genesis 15 we see Abraham do as he was told; remember Abraham has already been declared righteous, so this isn't something he is doing to gain righteousness. And we see that he brings the animals to the Lord and divides them in two. Then the Lord causes a deep sleep to come over Abraham and the Lord walks between the divided animals, signifying that if He did not do what He promised then the same as happened to the animals would happen to the Lord. If you remember Mr. Meyer's message about this covenant, he told us that typically in Eastern cultures, both people involved in the covenant would walk between the animals signifying that if either one did not live up to their side of the bargain, then they would forfeit their life. Well, here we see that only the Lord walks through the animals. This is something the Lord was going to do, and it didn't matter what Abraham did. This giving of the kingdom is a sovereign act of the Lord that He would do unilaterally, without Abraham's help. We find in the next chapter of Genesis that Abraham forgets this promise, and he tried to help the Lord along in His plan to make a nation from him, and that didn't work out too well. Abraham fathers Ishmael through the Egyptian maid, Hagar, in an attempt to make the nation on his own instead of relying on the Lord. But, the Lord was still faithful to His promise and Abraham and Sarah became the parents of the promised child Isaac. So, Abraham didn't do any work to make the promised nation happen. He just needed to believe God, and it was done for him. This is what was symbolized when the Lord alone walked through the divided animals. This nation was God's doing. And we see how Abraham's faith and the promised nation are tied together. This is why the Lord, back in Matthew 8, after healing the centurion's servant, makes reference to this same Kingdom. He commends the centurion's faith and then speaks about the coming Kingdom in which He, Jesus, would be the ruler. The Israelites knew that the Kingdom had not been established when Jesus was on the earth, they knew that they had not possessed all the land promised, they knew that the earth had not been renewed like is prophesied about in the OT. This is why the disciples asked questions about the Kingdom, who would be the greatest, and if Jesus was going to establish the Kingdom now that He was risen in Acts 1. Israel has still not possessed all this land. So, as Jesus told the disciples in Acts 1, **"it is not for us to know**

when the Father will establish His Kingdom.” That means it hasn’t happened yet, it is not now, but rest assured that it will happen in the future because the Lord said that it would. This is a solemn promise from the Lord to Abraham in chapter 15, he will be the father of a nation, and they will possess the land from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates River. So, we are still looking forward to this Kingdom being established where Jesus rules over His nation. This is critical to realize as it shapes our understanding of future events prophesied about in the Bible. But, our main topic today is Abraham’s faith. He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. Now, Paul says back in Romans 4, that those who put their faith in Christ are justified. You can turn back to Romans 4 and verse 4. **Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.** Notice that the faith is credited just like it was to the centurion and to the 2 blind men. If we believe that Jesus can justify the ungodly, then He will do it, and our faith is credited as righteousness. The centurion believed that Jesus could heal his servant, and he was healed. The 2 blind men believed that Jesus could give them sight, and He did it. If we believe that Jesus can justify us, or relieve us of our guilt because of our sin, then He will do it. We are justified by our faith in Christ. He gives us a righteous standing with God the Father because we put our faith in the perfect One, Jesus Christ. Paul goes on to point out that this was done before Abraham was circumcised and before the Law was given, so those two things, which the Jews relied so heavily on, have nothing to do with salvation, they do not justify, only faith justifies, only faith can save you from your sins. We see this in verses 9-13. Verse 9 **Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, “ Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness.” 10 How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; 11 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, 12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.** He continues in verse 13 **For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.** So, we have both circumcision and the Law excluded from salvation, or righteousness. Only faith, apart from works leads to salvation and a righteous standing before God.

Abraham’s Righteousness Demonstrated

Now, lest we believe that this leads to some sort of “easy believism”, we need to look at how Abraham was tested after he believed God, after he had his righteous standing before God. Abraham wasn’t just left alone by the Lord after he believed. The Lord gave him certain things to do to demonstrate his faith. We will look at a couple of those things here today so we can apply our faith to our daily walk with the Lord. It’s great to know that we can have a righteous standing with the Lord based solely on faith, but we shouldn’t just leave it at that. We need to grow in our knowledge of Him, we need to be

vessels for His use on this earth, and we are His vessels when we obey His word to us. Let's see how Abraham did that in his life.

The first thing the Lord asked Abraham to do was to be circumcised. This occurs in Gen 17 where God confirms his covenant with Abraham by telling him to circumcise himself and all the men and boys in his household. Now, Abraham has already tried to take things into his own hands with Hagar who bore him a son named Ishmael in chapter 16. Here in chapter 17 though the Lord says to Abraham that he will have a son, from Sarah his wife, and this son will be the father of a great nation. Abraham questions the Lord, asking if Ishmael should be the chosen one since, he and Sarah are so old now. Basically, Abraham is saying that he and Sarah are too old to have a child at this point, they are past their childbearing years, and so he just can't see how this is going to happen. But, the Lord wants Abraham to see that this is all His doing. Just like the original covenant and how Abraham just believed and the Lord passed through the animals to confirm the covenant, here the Lord is showing that it is He who is making this happen, not Abraham. The Bible does not give Abraham's verbal response in this instance when the Lord told him to circumcise the men, but it does say that he obeys the Lord in circumcising the boys and men in his house, including himself and Ishmael. Now, this is not what made Abraham righteous in the sight of the Lord. Notice that there is no mention of righteousness in this passage. The Lord does not say, circumcise your men, and they will be righteous. It says nothing of the standing of the people whom Abraham circumcised. Abraham was righteous because he had faith in the Lord, and he demonstrated his faith by doing as the Lord said, and circumcising the males in his household. This is the first step of obedience that we see from Abraham, but there is one that is even greater to come.

To get to this we need to fast forward quite a bit in Abraham's life. In the interest of time we will skip over the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and how Abraham lied about his wife Sarah for the second time. If you read the whole story, you see that Abraham was not a perfect man, even though he is recognized for his great faith. He slipped up, he sinned, he tried to take matters into his own hands, but he always returned to the Lord, and he always wanted the Lord's will to be done. So, in chapter 21 of Genesis we see that Isaac is finally born to Sarah when Abraham was 100 years old. The birth of Isaac is a miracle, because both Abraham and Sarah are passed the age when they could have children. This isn't a surprise baby; this is a miracle baby. The Lord wanted Abraham to realize that this nation was all His doing, He took Abraham and Sarah out of the equation, and He gave them the miracle child, Isaac. Then we come to chapter 22 and the greatest test of Abraham's life. After years and years of waiting for the promised son, he is finally born to Sarah, and in the beginning of chapter 22 we see what the Lord asks Abraham to do with his beloved son. **Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.** This is the ultimate test of Abraham's faith. For most of his adult life Abraham has had the promise from the Lord of his descendants becoming a great nation. Now, after decades of waiting he finally has the son who would become that great nation, and the Lord asks him to give him as a burnt offering. Abraham must have been crushed,

and overwhelmed. This is how we may feel often times going through trials that the Lord puts us through. But, what does this man of great faith do? He doesn't waver, or wonder according to the record that we have. It says that he rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, split wood for the offering, gathered his son and two servants to go with him, and set off on the journey. It says in verse 4 that on the third day they saw the mountain that they were to go to. This tells me that Abraham was quite a man, he was over 100 years old at this point, the Lord had told him to sacrifice his son in a specific place, and it was 3 days journey away. So, Abraham was not only able to travel this far at 100 plus years old, but he kept on his way, knowing what he was called to do while traveling those three days. What a long and mentally arduous time those three days must have been for Abraham. But he kept on and carried on, persevering in his faith, like Paul told the Corinthians to do in 1 Cor 15:58 **Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.** This, Abraham was certainly doing, abounding in the work the Lord had called him to do. There is so much in this passage, it is a shame to go over it quickly, but we need to move on. So, Abraham takes his son to sacrifice him, but notice what he says to the two servants who are with them in verse 5 **Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you. I and the lad will return to you.** Abraham had faith that something would happen to enable Isaac and him to both return. We find out in the book of Hebrews what Abraham thought would happen, which is a real window into this man of faith's heart. Hebrews 11:17 and following say **By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; 18 it was he to whom it was said, "IN Isaac your descendants shall be called." 19 He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.** Abraham thought that the Lord would raise Isaac from the dead if he went through with the sacrifice. Now, remember that this is before any person is recorded as being raised from the dead in Scripture. So, it shows that Abraham truly understood the power of the God in whom he believed. He knew that God would give him the son; he knew that he would become a great nation, and he knew that God would raise Isaac from the dead if necessary to make it happen. And we all know that the Lord called out to Abraham as he raised the knife to sacrifice his only son, and showed him the ram that would substitute as the sacrifice for Isaac. So, Abraham demonstrated his faith by being willing to sacrifice his promised son if that is what the Lord wanted him to do. Sometimes the Lord may be calling us to do some seemingly crazy thing, and we need to obey Him. He may be calling you to teach your children at home, when the rest of the world thinks you are crazy. He may be calling you to quit your job and move to a new place for some sort of ministry. He may be calling you to do something as simple as witness to the person who sits next to you at work, or school or a person across the street. He may be calling you to go through some horrible trial. The possibilities are endless, but the reality is that we need to be like Abraham, willing to do what the Lord calls us to do. We need to demonstrate our faith by obeying. Remember that this act of demonstrating is not what makes us righteous, but it does demonstrate to the Lord and the world that we do have faith in Him. When we realize our position in Christ is in heaven it makes the obeying easier. We are already with Christ in heaven positionally because of what Christ has done for us. Notice

Colossians 3 where it says **Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.** When we realize that we are with Christ in heaven, and His Holy Spirit lives within us, we should walk as if we know this as fact. We should obey the Lord because of our position with Him in heaven. We should show Him, the one who loved us enough to die for our sins, that we love Him by obeying Him and His word.

Conclusion

So, let's wrap this up by going back to Romans 4. We have seen that Abraham was not made righteous by his actions, but only because of his faith. Here in Romans 4 Paul says that he was named as righteous before he was circumcised and before the Law was even given. Verse 16 says **16 For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, 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.** So, we see that the fact of Abraham being named righteous before the circumcision was so that he would be the father of all who believe. He was the father of the nation of Israel through the promised son Isaac. But, Abraham was the father of all who would believe, not just this chosen line of Israel. What a tremendous blessing this is to those of us who are not from the Israelite line. We are children of Abraham because we are of the same faith that he was. We believe in Christ, and it is credited to us as righteousness. We believe that Christ can take away our sins, and He does this on the basis of our faith, just like he healed the centurion's servant on the basis of his faith, and just like he healed the blind men on the basis of their faith. We see this in the end of the chapter in verses 23-25, the KJV says **Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; 25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.** So the story of Abraham wasn't just written because it's a great story of the faith of one man, it isn't just a motivational story. But it is written so that we may know how to have salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and His payment for our sins. And my prayer for all of us is that after we have placed our faith in Christ, we realize our heavenly position in Christ, and we serve Him with our lives because His love for us is so great.