

Grace for a Growing Faith

Grace from the Patriarchs

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Bible Text: Genesis 15-17

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Over a decade ago, the pastoral staff just for some camaraderie, when I was about 4 years into my position here at Faith, decided to go to Lake Erie for walleye fishing. If I had any doubts about my dislike for boat fishing, well, that day cured it. When we were probably 45 minutes a long way from shore, you can't even see the shore anymore, the winds started picking up and the captain said, "We'd better start heading back because we don't want to be out on Lake Erie in a storm." I think Doc Smith was there, okay? So remember this, Doc? If we had been, well, basically we didn't get what we wanted that day, okay? We didn't get what...we were out in a storm that day and, in our case, the experienced captain knew exactly where he was going and he got us back safely to shore with several of us throwing up on the sides. Remember that, Doc? I won't say who that was. I typically have a strong stomach, okay?

If we had been without an experienced captain, what would we have needed? Probably a solid anchor to help us to weather the storm so that we didn't end up in Canada or something like that. We needed an anchor in the midst of the storm and what we are studying today about Abraham's faith is declared to be an anchor for the soul. God does say that there is an anchor for the soul that goes down deep and hangs onto something that is sure. Listen to this in Hebrews 6:19, "This hope," and he's talking about the promises to Abraham that resulted in the ultimate lineage in the seed of Jesus Christ our Savior, "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast." If you are here today and life's storms seem to be relentless, please listen carefully.

We are continuing our theme this year of "Finding Grace." This summer we are learning about grace from the patriarchs. The patriarchs, if you don't know that term were men named Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph and they are described in the book of Genesis 12-50. It is the beginning of God's gracious plan to re-engage the lost, cursed, death-filled earth and to begin to bring a reversing of the curse and instead blessing once again. Today, we are studying "Grace for a Growing Faith."

Turn in your Bibles, if you will, to Genesis 15 and we're going to highlight Genesis 15 through 17. That is on page 10 in the Old Testament, the first book of the Bible, the front section of the Bible in the chair in front of you. I do plan to read a little bit more Scripture today so please follow along and just kind of trace it with me as I lead you along. We will

be over-viewing about the 30,000 foot level of Scripture here today. If you do want the more indepth treatment of these very rich chapters that give us a foundation for our faith, then I would invite you to go to the link that I placed in your bulletin, in your notes there, and over at Faith West, our Faith groups are going through a study on Genesis 12 through 50 and there is a more, a 10,000 foot level as opposed to the 30,000 foot level that you'll get today.

First, let me remind you of the storyline before we get into Genesis 15. God had called a childless, landless, tribal based, idolatrous wanderer who tended to be a squatter and thus a nuisance on other people's lands to leave his way of life, to leave his tribe and his family, to leave his idols, to leave his geographical location in order to receive land for a landless wanderer, a life-giving relationship with God in place of dead relationship with idols, to receive purpose of being a blessing to the nations instead of a nuisance and to receive a child that would provide the physical lineage that would be a blessing to the world. Notice his promises: land, relationship with God, purpose and procreation. It's an echo of the Garden of Eden as God re-establishes his blessing in the midst of a sin-cursed world.

Abraham amazingly responded to God's call and he participates. He believed God and took his wife Sarah with him to the land that God showed him. However, as we learned last week, Abraham did not make the connection that God's plan for offspring included what probably would seem obvious, his wife. Abraham saw that Sarah had a, what did she have? A dead womb. He did not fully understand yet that the one who is calling him is the one who created the womb in the first place, therefore in his mind, he thought the promises of God were going to come through him and Sarah was expendable. So last week in Genesis 13, we saw Abraham giving up Sarah in order to save himself but God graciously rescued Sarah in Abraham's failure of faith. In the subsequent chapters, Genesis 13 and 14, we read that God allows Abraham to become a powerful and influential force in the new land.

Chapter 14 talks about Abraham and his 300 powerful force men and he goes about and rescues his nephew, Lot, and the king of Sodom, from some invaders in the land. After Abraham returns from rescuing, Abraham refuses the earthly reward from the king of Sodom that the king of Sodom rightly owed him. So Abraham is growing in wealth and power and influence in the land at God's hand but, but, he is not growing in one particular way: Sarah has a dead womb and they are barren.

Genesis 15:1 begins this. Follow along. I will do some skipping here. "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.'" Notice that God promises reward right after Abraham refused reward, earthly rewards in the previous chapter.

"Abram said, 'O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.'" At this point, Faith family, does God believe,

does Abraham believe that God's plan is to include Sarah? Does he believe that at this point? You say? Faith West, you say? Say it for them, "No."

"And He took him outside and said, 'Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars,'" as if to say, "The God who created those stars that you're looking up there, Abraham, know that I can give you a child."

"If you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' Then Abraham believed in the LORD; and God reckoned it to him as righteousness. And God said to him, 'I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.' Abraham said, 'O Lord GOD,' I'm believing but help my belief. "How may I know that I will possess it?" So God said to him, 'Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon,'" and this is where the audience loses me because they don't like sacrifices in the Old Testament. Let's go and read something in the New Testament that I understand, right? No, no, no, hang with me. This is going to be a beautiful ceremony even though it's very, well, deals with corpses and blood and all that kind of stuff. It will be beautiful in the end, I promise you. I'm going to explain it in the end.

Jump down 2 verses, well, look at verse 9, so God said, "Bring me all these things." Verse 10, "Then Abram brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other." Verse 17, "It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram."

Okay, now jump to chapter 16, verse 1. Fast-forward also in your mind ten years. Ten years, around that time, ten years later. Later. "Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children," it's been so long but they had an Egyptian handmaid from that episode in Egypt named Hagar. "Sarai said to Abram," as they began to reason this out in their own wisdom, "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. After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife. Abram went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when Sarai saw that she had conceived," conflict and trouble started then.

Chapter 17, fast-forward another 15 years, 25 years, folks. 25 years Abraham has waited for the promise. We don't even wait for our dinners like 2 seconds. Fast food, everything is fast. He waited 25 years. "Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly. Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, 'As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you will be the father of a multitude of nations. "No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations."

Jump down to verse 9, "God said further to Abraham, 'Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant.'" Verse 10, "This is My covenant," you are going to be circumcised, "every male among you." Verse 15, "Then God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.'" Basically, she's going to be mother of many nations as well. "I'm going to bless her and she will be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her." Then when Abraham realized this he worshiped God. Is that what it says? "Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, 'Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who,' has a, say it: dead womb, "who is ninety years old, bear a child?" Verse 22, "When God finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham," and Abraham and all of his people got circumcised. At 99 years old. We'll talk a little bit more about that in just a moment.

This morning, we want to understand 4 evidences of a growing faith that provide an anchor for your soul. As we go through these evidences of a growing faith, the question is: do you see these evidences in your life? I will try to spell them out very clearly so that you have a measure. Do I see the kind of growing faith that Abraham was manifesting in his walk with God? Do I see that in my own life? Here is the first one: we see in Abraham and deepening dependence upon God's promises. I purposely traced the plotline here that God reveals a little bit more and more about his plan and his ways with each step that Abraham takes. Initially, God has said, "I'm going to make you into a great nation." Everybody thinking clearly might think, "Well, that's going to come through my children," but Abraham didn't quite get it because his wife had a, you say it: a dead womb. So Abraham does not understand how, in fact, he totally misses how but in faith he does go to the land that God tells him. Then God says a bit more specifically now, "Okay Abraham, it's not Lot, your nephew, that you took with you. It's not Eliezer, your hired servant. A child will come forth from your own body."

So Abraham waits a little longer and a little longer and then he begins to reason with his own reason or his wife's reason, "Maybe God wants me to have a baby with another woman because Sarah has a," you say it, "dead womb." Finally, as we saw in chapter 17, God says without ambiguity, "Abraham, you know this marriage thing that I created between you and Sarah? Can you get a clue that my chosen child would be between you 2 married folks? So that I make it so that you don't forget, I'm going to put a sign on your private parts right there, okay? I'm going to put a sign right there," so that that is where the life-giving seed would come out and be united with the womb of Sarah and a baby would come. Abraham fascinatingly responds and he gets circumcised at 99 years old. Men, what kind of faith does that take? Children, if you don't know what that circumcision is, ask your parents today, alright? What do I do with a text like this? I've got to say something.

At each step, Abraham does act, folks. Not perfectly. Not without failure. But he does respond and God gives Abraham a deeper understanding of his plans at each step. At each step, you begin to see a man who is grappling with God's promises as he tries to understand who this God is and how he's working in his life and his words and his ways. It's almost like in the New Testament where a father reaches out to Jesus and said, "Jesus,

can you heal my son? I know you can, if you will?" And Jesus says, "If you can? All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "O Lord, I believe! Just help my unbelief!" You see Abraham reaching out to God and trying to understand all that and God reaching back to Abraham. Thus over 25 years you begin to see increasing understanding of God's words and God's ways in Abraham's life.

I just want to add here, folks, also that Abraham's faith was always, always, always, say "always." It was always based upon God's word. It was never based upon his wishes, his opinions, the way he thought it would work out because the ways he thought it would work out was not God's ways. It was not based upon his preferences nor his speculation. There is no faith anchor in your thinking about how you think your life should go. There is no faith anchor in your thinking about your career plans or your thinking about your parenting plans about how you want your children to turn out. There is no faith anchor in your plans, your educational plans or college students at Faith West, your dating plans, your marriage partner plans. Folks, a growing faith will be increasing in understanding God's words and his ways. I hope you are experiencing that in your life.

Let me ask you now, pause just for a little bit of reflection: think through your last week. Has there been a time in your last week where something like this happens as you talk to yourself? Okay, by the way, who talks to you more than anybody else talks to you? Okay. Husbands, don't say your wife. No, it's you. It's you. You talk to yourself more than anybody else and I want to know if your speech last week sounded something like this in you, "Oh God, I do understand a little bit more about this, it's more delightful to give rather than to receive. It's more delightful to give, rather than receive," not deceive. "I understand that a little bit more this past week because I took you at your word and I did it. I reached out to a neighborhood kid at VBS and he was delighted to come. I reached out and he's planning to come. It was more delightful. Father, I'm beginning to understand it is more delightful to give rather than receive." Maybe something like this, "Oh God, when you promised peace that surpasses understanding, last week I believed it. When my week was hard and my soul was more quiet than it usually is, I tasted and saw how good you were, God." Are you seeing that in your faith? "God, I'm seeing your plan for marriage, for sex, for parenting, for finances, for church, for loving our neighbors. It's better than anything else the world has to offer." A growing faith will increasingly understand and delight in God's words and his ways.

As Abraham was deepening his dependence upon God's word, we also see at the same time he was loosening his attachments to earthly securities. I pointed that out in the text that God came to Abraham in Genesis 15 on the heels of his victory over 5 invader kings. Abraham had refused the earthly reward that the king of Sodom, by the way, what happens to Sodom later on? It gets destroyed. The king of Sodom grudgingly disrespected Abraham. Abraham had a right to the earthly rewards. Abraham refused them when you see where ultimately Sodom ended up. But Abraham was in a land that was prone to invasion and turmoil without a lot of security. Abraham was in a land, however, not to be secure himself, not to be comfortable himself, but to be a blessing to others. So he went out and protected the people of the land and rescued them and humbly refused to take earthly rewards from them even when he rightly had a claim to it and in

that context, God comes to him and says, "Don't fear, Abraham, I know this land that I brought you to is fraught with danger. Don't fear. I am your shield. Your reward will be great and you will ultimately have a lineage that will be the security of the entire world." God promises him a greater security than any military army ever could provide. God promises him a greater reward than any rescued captive could pay. Abraham was not there to build an earthly kingdom that was temporary and comfortable for his life on this earth. Abraham was there to build God's kingdom through blessing people, not taking from them.

Then Scripture records probably the greatest single line of faith, "Abraham believed God and God counted that faith, he counted that faith as righteousness." Not deeds that he had done but he counted the faith that he manifested in God's word as righteousness. Abraham demonstrated in faith that he was not attached to the temporary securities of this world but the eternal security in God.

Folks, when the storms of life come, what do they show? When the storms of life come, so they come and they begin to rock your world and you notice also this: an anchor goes down and grabs hold of the earth but does the earth ever shake as well? That's called an earthquake, do you know that? The earth shakes, okay. The earth does shake. Here's where I'm going: even the earth is not a secure foundation. Even the heaven's storm. So the things on the earth, the earth itself and the heavens are not secure anchors for your soul and the storms of life show that. The storms of life show that money gets spent and lost. There is no security in those. The storms of life show that possessions get stolen and damaged. The storms of life show that temporary pleasures are just that, temporary. The storms of life show that the praise of man lasts for 15 minutes until that man gets honked off at you again. The storms of life show that businesses, your business, our nation, nations, rise and fall. There is no anchor there.

Does your faith show evidence of when the things of the earth and the earth itself shakes, you don't because you have a loosening attachment to this world? Folks, our kids that are coming to VBS in just over a week, they'll find their anchor somewhere. They are learning it from the parents and if they're learning anchors that are not God, they are destined to fail in the times of the storm. So folks, will you take this as an encouragement? Our kids in this community need the anchor of their soul which is God and invite them, believing that that is their only hope.

A growing faith that provides an anchor for your soul has a deepening dependence upon God's promise. Secondly, it has this: an increasing awareness of the futility of working things out on our own. God's promise to Abraham was that a child or an heir would come through his own aging body. The promised heir would not be his nephew Lot that he took with him on this vacation. The promised heir would not be Eliezer his hired servant. The promised heir would come through his own body and in Genesis 16, Abraham and Sarah continue to wait. Year after year they wait. They began to reason in their own wisdom. "Well, there's this cultural practice out there that if we're barren, I mean, it is acceptable in our culture that I can take a handmaid and I can have a child through the handmaid. That's acceptable in our culture. Maybe that's what God meant. I mean, we've been

waiting so long, maybe he's just waiting for us to act in that way. After all, God said that the seed would come from my own body so if I go into Hagar, is it from my own body? Is it from my own body?" So in some way, again, you see him, "God, I believe but help me in my belief." He's trying to work out the promises of God in his own wisdom.

Abraham and Sarah did act out their own wisdom. Abraham had a child with the Egyptian handmaiden Hagar. That child's name was Ishmael. God allowed Ishmael to become a mighty people as you survey history and also as we survey history, Abraham's actions led to far-reaching consequences. His actions resulted in generations of conflicts that we still see to this day. So we could have a whole point about how your sin here has consequences for like eternity but I'm trying to be a little more encouraging than that today, alright?

Abraham should have said, "I don't know how God's promises are going to work out but I'm going to be faithful to my wife. I'm going to love her and I don't fully see God's plan at this moment in time, but I'm going to love my wife and cultivate my one flesh relationship with her and when God acts, God acts. And if God doesn't want me to act in that way, he can reveal it otherwise but right now I'm going to do what I know to be faithful to my wife." Instead, Abraham and Sarah acted in their own wisdom and the result was conflict and turmoil of which the world can see even today. A growing faith begins to experience and understand that trying to figure out everything on your own results in more messes.

Okay, let's go back to your week last week. Maybe you're talking to yourself in some way like this, "I am seeing God and trying to be successful by lying or cheating or deception and hiding things and evading taxes, I am seeing, God, that that results in more drama than simply being filled with integrity. I'm seeing that, God." Or, "God, thank you for allowing me to see that when I manipulate relationships with demands and threats and pity-parties and, Father God, I'm beginning to see that that brings division instead of me just doing what is right which brings harmony. God, I'm beginning to see that my clamoring to be loved by people by compromising my convictions and just saying whatever they say only results in shallow, fair-weather friends." If you are saying those things to yourself and seeing that, my friends, your faith is growing, praise the Lord.

A third evidence of a growing faith is this: a budding anticipation that the Creator God can act in totally unexpected ways. In Genesis 17, God finally spells it out to Abraham what should have been obvious. "Abraham, alright, a child will come through you and Sarah." That concept of a child coming through Sarah had never entered Abraham's mind. Why? Why? Because Sarah had a dead womb and when Abraham hears God's plan, what is his response? He laughs. Now folks, we can think of this laugh as a total laugh of unbelief but remember what happens at the end of the chapter? Abraham circumcises himself and all those who are with him. In brief, here's what circumcision was: it was a physical mark by God himself to remind Abraham and all of the children of Israel subsequent that the child of the promise through this lineage would come through this people. It was a mark to demarcate those people and every time Abraham had sex with

his wife, at least one time, he would be reminded that the promise of life is coming through those 2. God would bring life through as good as dead Abraham and Sarah.

Abraham's laugh was probably the shock of amazement. The shock of amazement as they had first considered something that heretofore had been unimaginable and that is precisely where God wanted to get Abraham on his journey of faith, that the Creator God who created all of this is greater than any of it and can do anything he wants and can create life out of deadness, blessing in place of cursing. A growing faith begins to imagine that God has no limitations. He can bring life from deadness, folks. He can bring blessing to a cursed world. He can bring healing to brokenness. He can bring wholeness to incompleteness. In a growing faith, do you find yourself beginning to anticipate what God can do instead of what God can't do? Do you do that?

Okay, go back to last week. Do you find yourself speaking to yourself in this way, "God, I've never faced something like this before but, God, I know you have a way through this that I have not yet imagined and I'm not going to fear, God. I'm not going to fear, comma, God. I'll trust in your goodness." There's your anchor. There's your anchor. Maybe something like this, relationship with spouse, relationships with children, relationship with a friend, "God, that relationship seems to be beyond repair but, God, I know you can act in my heart and their's in ways that I haven't thought about yet so I'm going to trust your wisdom and your timing and learn how to love." There's your anchor. "God, the situation this past week didn't turn out anything like I wanted or thought it was going to be but, God, I believe you have a better plan that I haven't thought of. I'm not going to despair. I'm not going to give into depression but I will anticipate what you have for me." Did your talking to yourself this past week sound like that? If it did, my friends, you have evidence of a growing faith that anchors your soul.

The fourth evidence of a growing faith is this: a developing conviction that only God himself is the anchor. Alright, I mentioned that I would explain that bizarre ceremony where Abraham killed animals and divided them into pieces and this gets to be a bloody gory mess here and people are walking between dead corpses, okay? It's just what you love to hear on a Sunday morning, don't you? I'm going to explain it. That ceremony was initiated by God in response to Abraham's, "God, I believe. Help my unbelief. How may I know for sure?" God said to Abraham, "Bring me these animals." Abraham brought them. He cut them in 2 and it came about when the sun had set that there was this fire thing walking between the pieces. Okay, bizarre, I know. It's not something that we're familiar with today. Let me try to illustrate the bizarrely unfamiliar with something that you know about. When we make a promise or an oath today, how do we seal it? Okay, the most common way, when I make a promise or an oath, how do I seal it? I see this, are you waving or are you saying, "Hurry up and be done, Brent"? A signature. Okay, for whatever reason, that is what our society has chosen in regard to our oaths. It should be enough that our word is there, right? But our signature has power in some way. We place our promises in writing and then we sign our signature to it. Our signatures indicate that we have made an oath and somehow indicates that if we don't fulfill the commitment, we are subject to consequences.

Well, can I ask you: why does a wandering nomad need a paper and pen and big file cabinets full of legal documents? Does he have a use for those kinds of things? No, not at all. He doesn't have a use for lawyers either, alright. So, no offense to any lawyers here. What a wandering nomad has at his disposal is flocks. Here's what they did to make binding oaths. They would take animals of their flocks and kill them. They would cut animals in half, laying one half on a small slope and the other half on the opposite small slope with a ravine in the middle. The blood from the pieces would flow down forming a bloodstream in the middle. Then both parties, both, how many did I say? Both parties involved in the agreement would walk through the blood, symbolically saying this, "May my blood be spilled if I do not fulfill my oath. May I be like one of these animals if I do not fulfill my word." That's a little more significant than our pen thing, right? You might take it a little bit more seriously if you had to go and chop up Rover there and split him in 2 and walk through the bloodstream and say, "May I be like Rover." I'm going to send kids crying home today, aren't I? The point, I'm totally off my notes. The point is that's how they made oaths. I'll leave it at that.

Now, listen carefully again to Genesis 15:17 and note how many people walked through. "It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch." Those 2 images, smoke and fire, are the exact same words that Moses used to describe God's manifestation at Mount Sinai. Smoke and fire. It's right here so this is a manifestation of God and the manifestation of God "passed between the pieces. On that day the LORD made a promise." What do we have here? God and Abraham making a commitment in the traditional nomadic way. However, there was something highly unusual here. What is it? Normally an agreement involves 2 parties as I had you repeat before. How many are walking here? How many are walking here? You say? Who is it? It's God. What is God saying? God is saying this, get this, "May I, God, die like these animals if I don't fulfill my word." God himself is the anchor, the oath, for fulfillment of his promises.

But that's not it, folks. That is not it. There's more. Abraham did not walk through the bloodstream. Hear me on this: God walked through both for God himself and for who, Jake? Yes Jake. Yes Brent. Yes Abraham. God walked through saying this, not only saying, "May I die if I don't fulfill my word," but "May I die if you don't fulfill your faith commitment." That's the good news in Genesis. God promises that his word is sure but even more than that God says, "I will provide even for your failures," and we know Abraham failed. 2,000 years later, time line correct there, 2,000 years later, a child would come from the lineage of Abraham, Jesus Christ, who himself unlike Abraham, never had a faith failure. He was the ultimate promised child. He was God in human flesh and God died for your faith failures. That's the good news. God made an oath also for your salvation, from your faith failures. There is the Gospel in Genesis.

Isn't that beautiful, Faith friends? That's why Hebrews 6:13 says this, so I read to you a bit of it, now let me read to you just a little bit more. "For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, 'I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you.' And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an

oath given," we see this oath process, "as confirmation is an end of every dispute. In the same way God, desiring even more to show," not just Abraham but all of us, "the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge," in Jesus Christ, the promised seed, "would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. This hope is your anchor." You anchor.

Grace for a growing faith, Faith family. Are you manifesting the evidences of a growing faith? Please don't take this, I want to spell out for you what faith is and you've seen it. I'm not trying to scare anybody here but I am asking you to look. Do you begin to see this in your life? And if you don't, please see one of the pastors. Please see somebody who can help you to have an anchoring faith, a deepening dependence. Do you see yourself growing more and more where God's words and his ways and less and less relying on your wisdom and your ways? Then during the midst of hard times and when things don't even seem to make sense, you begin to start imagining what God could do instead of what God can't do. And then all of this wraps up into: is God himself your anchor starting with faith in the one who died for you?

Let's pray.

Father, thank you for your goodness to us. Thank you for this beautiful passage. Thank you for the way that you have provided clarity and the way that you have provided anchors for our souls simply as we believe in Christ and grow in him. In Christ's name. Amen.