

## ***Romans 4:17-25,***

### ***“Abraham Kind of Faith”***

**Romans 4:17-25. “As it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.' [Genesis 17:5] He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed--the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it has been said to him. 'So shall your offspring be.' [Genesis 15:5] Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waiver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness.' The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”**

#### *Introduction*

“This morning I would like us to open our Bibles to Romans chapter 4. We'll begin with the 17<sup>th</sup> verse of the book of Romans 4, and we'll end the chapter today. We saw last week how Abraham was saved by grace through faith. Not by rituals, not by ceremonies, not by religious deeds that were done to him. Remember he was saved over here at the point of faith. Years later he went through a rite of circumcision. And then 430 years later, the Law was given. So circumcision couldn't have saved him, because it didn't happen for many years later. The Law couldn't have saved him, because the

Law hasn't even been given yet. He was saved by grace through faith. And now the apostle looks at the "Abraham kind of faith". And he gives us highlights of Abraham's faith, as if the apostle is saying 'Look, this faith that saves, this wonderful grace of God, that is claimed to ourselves by faith, it's not just something for heaven by-and-by, but it's something to help you live today, right here and now.' And he gives us insights into Abraham's faith. Let's look at verse 17, we'll read the portion of Scripture first, so follow along if you would. **Chapter 4, verse 17, "As it is written, the father of many nations have I made you."** That's what God said to Abram, but he said it to Abram before he even had a child, before he had any children whatsoever, and they were having an infertility problem in their home. And God said **'Don't worry, I'm making you the father of many nations.'** It goes on to say **"In the sight of God, in whom he believed, the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were."** Or as another translation has it **"and calls into being that which does not exist."** This is one of my favorite definitions of the living God whom we serve and love. He is the God who is able, he says, **'to give life to the dead, and who calls into being that which does not exist.'** Isn't that what has happened to us when we were justified, when we were declared not guilty -- didn't he credit us with righteousness that wasn't in existence a moment before? But then he called into being that which did not exist. He's the God of the miraculous, he's the God of power, the God of provision, whether it's salvation, whether it's food, or it's a shelter, or it's a life, Jesus Christ (Yeshua haMeschiach) is the one who has the life, the truth, and he is the one who is able to meet your needs.

### *What Is Hope?*

**Verse 18, "And hope against hope, he believed."** Now I hate to keep interrupting, but I just want to give a definition here of what hope is. Now, hope, we can say *'I hope that it snows tonight.'* And, you know, really, it's August in Phoenix Arizona. *'I'm not so sure, I hope I win the lottery, I hope I win the Reader's Digest Sweepstakes'* (my wife keeps sending all that stuff in -- I hope she wins, I really do, because we're married [laughter]). There's a lot of things we hope, but when we throw that word around in the secular usage, you know, we know there's not a chance, forget it man. But when the Bible uses the term hope it has an entirely different meaning.

So you might want to write it down. It means **“confident expectation”, “a confident expectation.”** In other words, it is not **“I hope so,”** it's **“I know so.”** OK? That's the way you should translate the term "hope" in the Bible. So it says **“in hope against hope,”** in other words, **“he confidently expected, he believed, in order that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, 'So shall your descendants be.’”** Verse 19, he had a problem, he was an old man. The Scripture seems to indicate, you know, we're getting a little personal. I don't know what it is that God doesn't mind giving his saints' personal details, but here we find out from God that Abraham looked at his body and his reproductive capacity, and he discovered that, **‘Hey, I'm an old man, and not just an old man, I'm an impotent old man. I can't father a child, I'm too old. Biologically I don't function anymore like I did when I was younger.’** And the Scripture says, **“And without becoming weak in faith, he contemplated his own body which was now good as dead”** -- and then he looks at his wife and says, **‘and she's been infertile forever, you know, and now she's an old woman. I mean, if she couldn't have a child when she was young and infertile, she's not going to have a child when she's old and infertile.’** Verse 20, **“Yet, with respect to the promise of God, HE DID NOT WAIVER IN UNBELIEF, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God”** -- I don't know how you're going to do it Lord, but praise your name -- **“and being fully assured that what he had promised, he was also able to perform. Therefore also it was reckoned as righteousness, not for his sake only was it written that it was reckoned to him (or credited to him), but for our sakes also, to whom it will be credited as those who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, raised because of our justification.”** Now we spent weeks and weeks and weeks talking about justification, and I want you to see now that the faith God accepts, that justifies, is a faith that gives you life. The grace that saves you is not just a saving grace, it's a living grace. It's going to help you get through life. There's power in Christ (Messiah). There's power in Christianity. There's a difference when you're a Christian (or Messianic believer).

### *Highlights Of Abraham's Faith*

Let's look at the highlights of Abraham's faith that are given here in the latter part of the chapter. I see three things. First of all I see that Abraham's faith was a faith in God himself. You say, 'Oh, you really think we're dumb, don't you Mark.' I know that sounds like Theology 101 or something, but it's important today to nail this down. **Abraham had faith in God. God** was the object of Abraham's faith. **Verse 17**, it says, **“He believed in him, the God who gives life to the dead, who calls into being that which does not exist.”** The virtue of Abraham's faith was in the object of his faith--God himself. It was the Lord Jesus Christ that Abraham placed his faith in. And how do we know? In John 8, let's look at it for a moment. John chapter 8, keep your finger here in Romans. In John chapter 8 Jesus was having a little discussion with the Pharisees and the Jewish leaders, and he was telling them, **‘You know, it would be really nice if you guys would be like your father Abraham, you claim him to be your father.’** In verse 39 they said, **John 8:39, “Abraham is our father.’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you're Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.”** Well what are the deeds of Abraham that he wanted them to do? Look now at verse, jump down to **verse 56**. And he gives us a revelation that we wouldn't have known without Jesus giving it to us. This is a revelational proof that is given to us in the Word of God, right from the mouth of our Lord. **“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad.”** He just there declared Abraham **“saw my day.” ‘Abraham, in the spirit, saw me coming to die, to be buried, to be raised from the dead, to be your savior.’** And of course they [the Jews listening to Jesus] don't like this. **“The Jews therefore said to him, ‘You're not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham?’”**, you know, real put-down. **‘You haven't even reached retirement yet, and you have seen Abraham?’** And Jesus shocks them by saying to them, **“Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.”** Of course, classically, he's claiming to be God. They knew he was claiming to be Deity, because in **verse 59, “Therefore they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.”** You see, the name “I AM” was a name there in the early chapters of Exodus that God had told Moses, when Moses asked him, **‘Lord what's your name? -- You're going to deliver your people, but they're going to say, ‘Who is this God?’ -- gotta have a name, give me your name.’** And it's interesting, what he gave them. Of all the names for God, he said **“Tell them I AM has sent you.” “This is the name I am to be known by throughout your generations, this is the name I'm to be known by forever, I AM.”** Woe, someone should start a church, you know, make that their distinctive, you have to call God I AM in order to be right. Because that's what he says, **“that's my name forever.”** You know,

the interesting thing here, is, then Jesus claimed to be I AM. They know what he was doing, that's why they picked up stones to stone him. **'You're claiming to be God.'** Well, back in Romans then, chapter 4, Abraham's faith was in God, it was actually in the Messiah to come.

### *You've Got To Increase Your Knowledge Of Who Your Faith Is In*

There's a major error in some of the churches today. There's such an emphasis on faith, that they even call themselves Faith Churches. **But faith itself is not as important as the object of our faith-Jesus Christ.** 'But Mark, doesn't God say 'Faith pleases him'? Well, my answer is Yes and No. You see, faith all by itself is not necessarily pleasing to God. Faith, to be real saving faith, has to have Jesus Christ [Yeshua haMeschiach] as its object. Faith in faith doesn't please God. Faith in Buddha doesn't please God. Faith in Mohammed doesn't please God. Faith in a false religion doesn't please God. There's only one place faith can be that pleases God, and that's in Jesus Christ. And so it's not the faith that is as important as it is the one your faith is in. Faith in yourself doesn't please God. And so, faith, faith, faith--positive, positive, positive, people say *'I'm trying to keep positive.'* Well that's OK, but the Bible says you got to have faith in Christ, you got to have faith in Jesus Christ. And then if your faith is in him, who cares how much faith you have, because you have faith in the Mighty God who can do what you can't do for yourself. I look at it this way, faith is like something that conducts electricity. It can be a huge cable, or it could be a little tiny wire thread. They both can conduct the electricity, they both can make contact, you know. And so, some people they act like, *'You've got to increase your faith.'* I don't think so, **I think you've got to increase your knowledge of who your faith is in.** I'm not a person with great faith, I think you know that. I guess that's not good, I wished I was the kind that -- I'm more of *'Show me, Lord.'* You know, I want to see the plan for the next five years. *'You want me to do **WHAT!?** But what if you don't come through, Lord?'* I know that's stupid, but that's sort of the way my nature is [me too!]. And what I've learned is, I don't have to increase my faith, to each is given a measure of faith, Jesus said. **But what I need to do is just relax and rest in my Big God, the one in whom my faith is.** You see they're all backwards, to be Faith

Churches, they ought to be God churches, they ought to be JESUS churches, where they talk about this awesome God they have -- not, get humanity out of it. I mean, the guilt-trips that some of us get put on. *'Well if I only had more faith, I'd be healed.'* Remember the guy who came for healing for his child to Jesus? And he says, **"Lord, if you're able"** -- the disciples hadn't been able to cast the demon out of the child, you know -- **"Lord, if you're able, could you do something here?"** And Jesus said, **"If I'm able!? Excuse me?-If I'm able?"** He said, **"If you can believe, all things are possible."** And then the guy fell down and says, **'Lord, I believe, but help my unbelief.'** I think that's where most of us find ourselves. [Tongue in cheek] And then Jesus said, until you reach this level of faith, until you read brother Hagen's books [laughter]. No, he didn't say that. This guy said, **'Lord, I don't have any faith, really, I got that much, but I'm looking at you. I believe, now make up the difference Lord.'** So, don't fall into the error of making faith some kind of a mystical kind of a thing. It's trusting God. It's believing Jesus Christ. ***It's resting in him, and whether your faith is great or little, you've got a big God.*** OK? And little faith, great faith, he'll save you, he'll deliver you, provide for you.

### *Second Point About Abraham's Faith Was His Faith In God's Word*

Second thing I see about Abraham's faith. First of all, his faith was in God, **secondly, his faith was in God's Word.** God had given Abraham his word, and he promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations, and Abraham believed that. God's word is powerful. In *Isaiah 55*, the Lord says in **verses 10 and 11**, he says, **'You know, you see the rain coming down, and you see how when it falls down it won't evaporate without first having watered the earth, and it provides nourishment for the plants, and helps the seeds to sprout.'** He says, **'Well, that's the way my Word is.'** He says, **'My Word, when it goes forth from me, it will succeed and accomplish what I send it out to do.'** You can trust God's Word [i.e. for us now, the Bible, for Abraham at that time, it was God's literal spoken word, right out of his mouth.] Abraham said **'God told me I'm going to be the father of many nations. I believe him. I believe his word, I believe God is going to do what he said.'** Do you? That is essential in a Christian life, you've got to believe God's going to do what he said he'd do. Like in

**Philippians 1:6** where he says, **“He that began a good work in you is going to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.”** That ought to make you secure in Christ. If he began something in you, he doesn't stop his work, he finishes it. Amen? And so you say, *‘Well, I don't know, I think we're on hold right now.’* You, don't make him a liar. God is not a man that he should lie. The Scripture says in Romans here, **“Let every mouth be shut up, and every man be found a liar, but let God be true.”** You believe his Word. When young Jeremiah the prophet, ***Jeremiah in chapter 1*** of Jeremiah, God said, ***‘You're my man, I've called you from before you were born. You're going to preach to great multitudes. You'll pluck up kings and you'll tear down nations [and build others or plant others].’*** And Jeremiah is going, ***‘No way, I'm just a kid! What am I going to say?’*** And God said, ***‘See, I've put my words in your mouth.’*** And then the Lord says in verse 29, in that same conversation to Jeremiah, he says to young Jeremiah, he says, ***‘Hey Jer, what do you see?’*** And he says, ***‘I see that you're watching over your Word to perform it.’*** Isn't that awesome? God right now is watching over this Word to perform it. There's some things the Lord wants to speak into your heart today. And this is a living thing. The Bible says in Hebrews 4 that this is a living, living sword, it's alive, it's powerful, it's able to do a work in your life that no human being can do. It's powerful, it's supernatural. God says, ***‘I don't care what kind of blockades you've got.’*** He says, ***‘Is not my Word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that shatters a rock?’*** ***Jeremiah 23:29.*** Jesus said, of course, **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my Word will never pass away.”** Never, ever -- you can believe what God's Word promises. I read the greatest book awhile back, it was called *“Seeds From the Sower,”* and it was about Michael and Audrey Guido. I hope I'm pronouncing their Italian name correctly, if it's something else, I don't know. But Michael and Audrey for years have had a radio program that originated I believe from Georgia or Florida, called *The Sower* -- a very popular little devotional program. And when they began their ministry years ago, they came into many times of financial need. We all can relate to that. We've all had times when, you know, we wonder where the money's going to come from to take care of what we need to take care of. And I was reading this one instance in their life that they share in the book. And I want to share it with you because it's so cool. These guys, early on in their ministry, decided we are not going to blab around what our needs are [just like George Mueller]. We're not going to come and say, *‘You know, we're about ready to lose our house, etc.’* Instead, they said, *‘God knows it, and we're going to let God provide. And if God doesn't provide, then he doesn't want us under the bondage of this thing.’*

And they never, ever let their needs be known to any man. Oh, they spent some time on their knees. [cf. George Mueller, see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/prayer/mueller.htm>.] And they went to this one church, they held a revival, God really blessed, and they were really looking forward to the love offering they were going to receive, because they had no money, they were penniless. They had a little bit of gas in the car, and they had to drive from San Jose down to Hollywood. And they had no money for gas. They were broke. And so they were thinking, *'You know, every church, they take the love offering at the end, and they count it out, and they give it to us, and we'll be on the road! Right, God provided.'* And so let me read you what happened to these guys. "We went from that meeting to the First Baptist Church of San Jose, California for a revival. The Lord really blessed at the revival. And just before the last service, the pastor there said, *'You know on Sunday night my men usually count the love offering right after it's taken, during the sermon, but your preaching is so good, they don't want to miss your preaching, do you mind if we count it Monday morning, and we'll mail it to you?'*" (Oh, no! You know, the temptation now, *'Oh, well, we really need it'*) He didn't say a word. He says, "No, ah, I don't mind." "After the pastor and his wife joined us for breakfast the next morning, we left for Hollywood. On the way, I asked *'Dear, do you know how much money I have right now?'* She said, *'No, but I'd like to.'* He says, *'I'm broke. I gave my last dollar to the bell-hop.'* *'How much money do you have, honey?'* She says, *'I'm broke too. I gave my last dollar to the maid.'* I suggested that while we drove, she close her eyes and asked the Lord for ten dollars for food while I kept mine on the road. Closing her eyes, Audrey prayed, *'Dear Lord, the Bible says, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. We are in want. We need \$10, please give it to us.'* Just then a truck [going] about seventy miles an hour passed us-whoosh, shaking the car. *'What's that, Audrey asked? Nothing, it's just a truck that passed us. Keep on praying, we need the money.'* Suddenly that truck that swooshed around them came to a sudden halt, screeching onto his brakes, and he jumped out of his truck and he went like this to try to get Michael to pull over. And so Michael pulled over, and this is what he reports. "Suddenly the same truck ahead screeched to a stop and the driver jumped out and came running right down the middle of the freeway toward our car. I pulled over and the driver came along side Audrey, and she asked, *'What shall I do?'* And Michael said, *'Roll down the window.'* And so she rolled down the window just as the man pushed his head into the car, and he said *'I don't know you, you don't know me, I've never seen you before, I'll never see you again, but as I passed your car, something said 'Give them ten dollars.'*" Awesome! He threw the money in Audrey's lap, ran back to his truck and drove

away. *“And we just sat there crying and thanking God.”* What an awesome story, man! Praise the Lord! That's the power. Look, believe his promises. Believe his Word. Now of course, how are you going to know what he's promising you if you're never in his Word? *‘Oh well, I'll soak some up by osmosis, I'll watch TV, I'll see what they say.’* You'd better be careful watching TV, because they're going to claim things that God never promised. [In the church that raised me spiritually, we called those programs *“The Sunday Morning Comedy Hour”*.] You'd better get back and make sure that what you're claiming is something that God promised. But I'll tell you more about that in a minute. So Abraham's was a faith in God's Word.

## *When God Tests You He Tests You To Show You Off*

**Thirdly, Abraham's faith was a faith that was a tested faith.** When I was in college I worked for one of the religion professors, one of the theology professors, and I was his reader, which meant I did everything but get his check. OK? I got paid minimum wage, he made me his slave, I taught his classes, wrote his tests, I graded his essays, I wrote the report cards. At the end the kids came and argued with me about their grades (because I'm the one that gave them their scores, you know, their grades), while he, you know, collected his money, I guess. But I'll have to admit, just sort of a mean thing I did, when I would write some of those tests, I decided, I'm gonna get these freshmen. And I would write some **hard** tests. Sort of tricky questions, the kind of test you hate. I have to confess, that was my former life [laughter]. But I wrote a test to show them up. I later relented, after arguing with too many of them about what a stupid test it was. But the thing was, I have taken many tests that I believe were written to show me up, too. ***But when God tests you, he doesn't test you to show you up, he tests you to show you off.*** When he tests you, it's not to show you how ignorant you are, how stupid, how dumb they are. *‘Look at how they worm through this! Look at how they grovel!’* That's not why he puts you through tests. It's to show you off, 'Look at my kids, they trust in me, there's gold in them or I wouldn't put them in the crucible, I wouldn't put them in the fire to refine them if there wasn't some real raw gold ore in there.' And so God puts us in the fire, he puts us in the tests, not to show us up, but to show us off! Abraham's faith was tested, it

was tested by hardships, it was tested by **impossible** circumstances, and by many bad feelings. Think about it, Abraham was 75 years old when the original promise was given to Sarah and him – **‘You're gonna have to be the father of many nations.’** He was 75, she was 65. I would say *‘Lord, you missed it by a few decades.’* I mean, I know some of you men, you're virile, and you're retired. But I mean, come on, a father of *many* nations. Then a period of 24 years went by. That's almost two and a half decades! And Sarah still is childless. Abraham now is impotent. And then the Lord comes down, and in Genesis 18 he renews his promise to Abraham. He says **‘Abraham, you're 99 years old? -- yes, you're unable to father a child now? -- yes, Sarah's still infertile? -- yes. This time next year, you're gonna be a Daddy, get the crib ready, get the room ready, get the diapers ready.’** Sarah's listening on the other side of the tent flap, laughing to herself -- **‘me in granny shoes, pregnant-I'm sure.’** And those granny boots that little old ladies wear, I'm sure [laughter]. Now, the Lord said, **‘Why's Sarah laughing?’** Again, she's in the area where the Lord is talking [but kind of out of sight]. He pulls back the curtain, **‘I'm not laughing, I'm not laughing, oh no, not me.’** A year later, she had a baby in her arms. I believe that God probably did an awesome job of restoration in both of their lives. [Yup, when Sarah died, Abraham married a young gal named Keturah, and she gave birth through him to multiple sons and daughters.] He probably rejuvenated them physically. I think it was a miracle of God's, not just a miracle of conception, but probably they were rejuvenated with youthful looks and the whole nine yards, and there's some evidence (and I'm not getting into that). But the thing is, can you image how weird that would seem? What an impossible situation that is. **‘I mean, come off it God, we've tried everything, every way, I've even made a big mistake with Hagar, remember?’ ‘My word's coming true. What I say I mean. What I say, I'll do.’** But Abraham's faith clung to God's promises despite discouragement, despite ridicule. That's hard to take sometimes. And sometimes walking in faith, you're going to have people laugh at you. This guys' name, you've got to remember, is Abram to begin with, which means “exalted father” -- what an embarrassing name to have when you're childless. *‘What's your name?’ ‘Ah, Abram.’ ‘ABRAM, ah, exalted father, oh, well how many kids do you have?’ ‘I don't have any, shut up, I don't want to hear any father jokes.’* And then, to make matters worse, after an impotent old man -- and there's no possible way that there's going to be any kiddies coming along the way -- God comes to you and says **‘Ah, Abe, I want to change your name.’ ‘Good! Call me Wonderful one, call me anything but Exalted father.’** The Lord said, **‘I got a new name**

*for you.'* He said, *'What is it?'* **'ABRAHAM.'** *'Oh no! That means father of a multitude!'* I kid you not, **Genesis 17:5 and 6, "The Lord came to Abraham said, 'No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be called Abraham, father of a multitude, for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations, and I will make you exceedingly fruitful.'"** Here's a shriveled up old man. **"And I will make NATIONS of you, and kings shall come forth from you."** Now it's really weird, you're at the bank, filling out the papers for name change, and everything, and people say *'What's this new name on your checks? What are you filling out all these papers for, you got get a new drivers license.'* *'Well, I'm changing my name.'* *'What's your new name?'* *'Abraham.'* *'What!?'* *'Abraham.'* *'What?'* **'ABRAHAM!'** *'(Oh, senility has set in, you know.)'* Hardships and ridicule come and test our faith, but they in the end are there to strengthen our faith -- not to tear your faith down. I mean, as Matt shared his testimony, and he was involved in a business. And some of you need to think about what you are involved in. What are you supporting with your life? He was involved in a business that did most of its money in booze. And as people go to the bars and pick each other up, and they'd sleep around, and they were destroying marriages, and people were getting killed on the freeway from alcoholic drivers and everything else, and he was involved in that. And the first time, he gave me that stupid excuse, *'Well, I'm the light in the darkness.'* I said, *'You're a light were you're not even supposed to be.'* I said, *'Don't you think they're going to say to you, you're a Christian, what are you doing here? -- managing of bars, ordering the booze, getting the disco music going.'* And God got that to him, *'What am I doing with my life? I'm supporting something that's destroying people. I'm supporting something that God hates. God hates sin. I'm supporting it with my life.'* [Now the Bible does not forbid the consumption of alcohol in extreme moderation. But extreme moderation is not practiced in most bars, and Pastor Martin is correct in his diagnosis of where most drinking in bars leads.] *'Oh but Mark, it's his livelihood, Mark, Mark!'* Don't Mark at me. Some of you need to face, *'What are you doing?'* You say, *'This is not the church for me.'* Maybe it's not. Maybe it's not. Because if you can be comfortable here, working for the things that destroy people's lives, I'm not sure it's the place for you. May God not allow you any comfort. But you see, Matt stepped out. Oh, I remember, *'What are we going to do, man?'* Here I am, great faith again. *'What are we gonna do, how are we going to support a family of one, two, three, four, five or six?'* Of course I had great faith in God, didn't I? No. But I did have a little faith in a Great God. And like Matt said, he stepped out, and said, *'Well, I got three months salary, you know. I'll have this job in no time, and*

*money in the bank.'* It was interesting, every month I'd go "Matt, how's it going?" "I've used up all my savings." "Oh no. Well I guess God really wanted you to step out in faith." And then the other day I was over at their house, you know, at the end of all of this. And I said, "Man, this is neat, to have a new dining room set." And they're not rolling in the dough, but I mean, not only does he have a new job, but they're able to get a new dining room set? I mean, you may have to step out in faith, you may have to leave something where you're influence is supporting something that is **bad**, it's **wrong**, **and you're a Christian! -- not just on Sundays.** You're a child of God all the time. God may call you to leave, to step out. You may be laughed at, people will say "You're crazy." Your relatives may say "Oh but your retirement plan, Oh but your children's education, Oh it's your house." I'll tell you what. God called Abraham to leave everything and follow him. God called him to leave everything, and follow him. Don't worry about timing.

*Abraham Wasn't Into The Confessions Of Faith Baloney Of  
Copeland & Hagen*

**If God's promised something in his Word, he'll do it, in his time.** He's never been late, I've told you that before. And he's never early, he's right on time. And even though all the natural physical laws and evidences were against Abraham, Abraham said, "**I don't believe what I see, I believe God can do what he's going to do.**" **Look at verses 19 and 20, "Without becoming weak in faith, he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead" --** Since he was about 100 years old -- "**and the deadness of Sarah's womb. Yet with respect to the promise of God he didn't waiver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God.**" That said he was an impotent man as far as procreative functions were concerned, his body had died. And on top of that Sarah was still infertile and past menopause. There's something we need to see here in the middle of all of this too, is that Abraham looked honestly at his situation. He didn't ignore it. The Bible says, "**and without becoming weak in faith, he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead.**" He didn't say 'I don't confess this!' 'I am virile, I'm a young man, I'm father, I'm father, I'm a father.' He didn't go around like some kook, lying. And sometimes, you know, from this 'faith camp', I get this stuff, you know, 'You don't say, Ah, my allergies are just really bothering me.' 'Well, brother, if you just confess it.' Well,

what am I supposed to do, as my nose is running down to my chin, what am I supposed to do?! 'Oh, this is not here.' 'Why is your nose running down your neck Mark?' 'What nose?' [laughter] 'I don't confess this [snort]', you know. He didn't ignore his problem, he said **"I got a problem."** **"Me, I'm impotent, my wife is infertile, and I'm 99 and she's 89. We got a problem."** He was honest, he faced it. He didn't ignore the facts. And God doesn't want us to lie about our situation. 'How you doing?' 'Praise, Hallelujah, I'm doing fine.' He doesn't want that. You don't have to be that way. 'Well, don't you get what you say?' I hope not. I hope not. There is no power in words [except words of slander and gossip, those words have power to hurt, cut and slice, those words the Bible calls sin, but that's an entirely different subject]. That is metaphysics, gang, that is *New Age occultism*. That is old fashioned witchcraft. And it snuck into the church through Hagin and Copeland, and the writings that they've read, they've read writings of guys who were trained in *New Thought* which we would call *New Age* philosophy today -- the roots of which are in religious science and Christian Science [my aunt Dorothy was a Christian Scientist, out in California, a wonderful woman, but she got old, sick and died]. And that's a fact that can be proven, books have been written on it. And the whole church has just swallowed it, you know, because they're nice guys, they look nice, they sound nice, and it sounds good. I'm telling you, it doesn't work. What do you do when you don't get healed? Oh it was *your faith*, right, you didn't have enough faith, so it's your fault. You know, the Bible does say there is a "sickness unto death." Yeah, **1 John 5, 1 Peter-Peter** says that **"If God should will that you suffer."** 'Oh, no it's never God's will that we suffer.' **"If God should will that we suffer"** -- just put yourself in the hands of God, trust him to do what's right. The apostle Paul says, **"Through many afflictions we must enter the Kingdom of God."** Man, there are financial afflictions, physical afflictions, spiritual afflictions, emotional afflictions. Don't buy into it [this name it claim it stuff, the Blab-it, Grab-it group], you'll become a very discouraged Christian if you buy into that nonsense. What you need is a faith that doesn't fail you when everything else around you does fail you. You need a faith that stands fast when everything else falls apart. And so Abraham looked honestly at his situation, and he said **'Hey, we got a problem here. I admit, we got a problem here, I don't know how God's going to do it, but he's promised to do it.'** He did consider the reality of his problem, the impossibility of his situation -- and yet he hung onto God's promises with a hand of faith. Another important thing to do, gang, is, when you talk about faith and hanging onto God's promises -- and I always get the people who say *'Amen brother Martin, Amen, Praise the Lord, I'm claiming*

*my Cadillac! -- my Lexus by faith!* You better make awful sure that what you're claiming by faith God has really promised. He hasn't promised that everybody's going to be rich. In fact, to the rich the apostle Paul says **'Hey you who are rich, don't put your trust in riches.'** Why? Because they take wings and fly! But doesn't the Bible say Mark that it is God's will that you be in good health and prosper. No, that's a greeting to **3<sup>rd</sup> John**. He says **"Beloved"**, he's opening his letter, he says **"I wish above all things that you might be in good health and prosper."** But that's not a doctrine, it wasn't a command, it wasn't a positive confession-it was just **'Hey, I hope you're doing OK, hope God's blessing you right now, hope you're OK, hope you're feeling good, we're OK.'** All doctrinal errors are made from pulling *text* out of *context*. Then somebody says it becomes a *proof-text*. Has he really said what I'm claiming for my self in his Word? Hey, what has God said? You better read it and find out. God has said **"I'll never leave you or forsake you"**, you can claim that one. He said **"I'll give my peace to you"**, you can claim that one. **"I'll provide all of your needs out of my riches and glory"**, **Philippians 4:19**, you can claim that. **Matthew 6:33**, **"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you"**, you can claim it. There are tons of promises that you can claim that really do apply. But when you begin to force God into what you want, you're in trouble, because God won't give. God is sovereign, God is in control, we need to get into what *he* wants our lives to be.

### *Finally, Abraham's Faith Was A Faith That Acted On What God Said*

**Finally, Abraham's faith was a faith that acted on what God said. Real faith can be defined as believing God, and acting upon it.** He believed God, and he acted on it. The great missionary, Hudson Taylor, when he first went to China, he was sailing there on a ship, and the ship came near this island that everybody new on the map was marked "cannibals." And wouldn't you know, with a sailing ship, the wind stopped. Not a bit of wind, not a speck of wind. And their boat began to drift toward the shore of this island. *'They saw the cannibals sharpening their knives and forks.'* They saw them filling big pots, lighting fires, smacking their lips, *'Ah Mmm, roast missionary, they're always tender.'* And as they drifted closer to the shore -- this story has been embellished slightly--as they drifted

closer to the shore the captain of the ship came to Hudson Taylor and said *"Pray for us, man! pray! -- that God will give us wind."* And Hudson Taylor says, *"I will pray on one condition."* And the captain said, *"What's that?! What's that?!"* *"That you drop the sails, let down the sails."* *"Why should I let down the sails? I'm not going to let down the sails, there's no wind."* Then Hudson Taylor said, *"Then I'm not praying. Why should I pray if I don't expect God to answer?"* The captain finally said *"OK, we'll let 'em down."* About half an hour later, *nock, nock, nock, nock* *"Taylor!"* *"Who is it?"* *"It's the captain!"* *"Taylor, are you still praying?!"* *"Yes I'm still praying."* *"Well, stop! We've got more wind than we know what to do with!"* God is so good. You see, if you believe and act on that belief, do what God is telling you to do. If he's telling you to step out in faith, he may tell you to leave a job, then leave that job. He may tell you to leave a relationship, you'd better leave that relationship if it's not pleasing to God. The Scripture says you can't be unequally yoked to an unbeliever. (I mean this is before you get married.) If you're dating someone who's an unbeliever, you've got the choice in front of you, to follow God. Abraham acted upon what God said, he believed God, but he showed his belief-he moved out of Ur [of the Chaldees], which would be like the L.A. county of the ancient world. He was told to leave! He had to leave his family, he had to leave his security, he had to leave his inheritance, he left his culture, he left his family's religion-all to follow God. And then he left it all, not knowing *where* he was going. You may step out in faith, just like Abraham did and it will cost you, it always costs to follow the Lord in obedience. Don't let that surprise you. The cheap gospel we preach sometimes, we don't let people know, *'Hey, you're family may get up tight with you.'* Your children may reject you. You may lose your house. You know, they'll look at you like you got the plague, or they'll totally turn their back on you. You leave some groups today, and they shun you. [Jews being called by the Lord, stepping out in faith and believing in Yeshua as their Messiah get shunned by parents, family and the whole Jewish community.] Jesus, Yeshua said don't be surprised. He said **"Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who shall not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come."** Look at what Jesus said in. Well first of all I want you to look at two more passages in Hebrews 8 and Hebrews 11, and one more passage. But this is important, gang. Hang tight for this, OK? **Hebrews 11, verse 8, "By faith", "by faith",** the faith we've been talking about, **"Abraham when he was called"** -- what's that next word? -- **"obeyed."** You see, there's a call, and then there's your response. When Jesus called his disciples, they had to make a decision, he'd say **"Follow me"** and

they had to either followed him or not follow him, right? **“By faith, Abraham when he was called, obeyed, by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance and he went”** -- what? -- **“not knowing where he was going.”** May I just tell you that sometimes living by faith, you don't know where you're going. Here at the church, people come by now to look at the church to find out what's making it work -- to find out why it's growing. They come and they attend a service, and they cannot figure out why it's growing. And they say *“What is your five year plan, Mark?”* And I said *“We don't have a five-year plan.”* *“Well, what's your one-year plan?”* I said, *“I'm just trying to get through this week, I don't have a one-year plan.”* [laughter] *“Well, what's your budget?”* *“We don't have a budget.”* *“Well, how do you do it?”* I said, *“Well, the elders and me, we pray.”* We don't know where we're going, necessarily, it's just sort of week to week. I've got an eye on some future things, but I mean, really, that's a walk of faith. That is most of a walk of faith. OK? *“I don't know, point me in the right direction.”* And really, why should he tell you any more until you leave earth? *“I never hear from the Lord.”* That's because you haven't done what he told you the last time he talked to you.

### *Spiritual Warfare Erupts When God Calls People*

Last verse, **Matthew 10, verse 34**, **“Don't think that I came to bring peace on the earth, I didn't come to bring peace, but a sword.”** Hey, wait a minute. What is Jesus saying? He's saying, ***‘Hey, sometimes when I come into a life a war erupts, not because I cause it, but because you're either with me or against me. Right? And if you're not with me, you're against me.’*** And so when Jesus comes into your life and begins to move in your life or into your family, into your situation, there may be those who aren't with the Lord and they'll be against you. And he goes on to say **“For I came to set a man against his father, and daughter against her mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's enemies will be the members of his household.”** He's saying, ***‘Look, don't be surprised when you accept me, a war erupts even at home, and the members of your own family who don't understand the gospel, they say ‘Forget it, you're out of here.’ We don't have anything to do with you.’*** He says, ***‘That's part of what my coming will do, when I come into your life.’*** But then he says something very important, he

says, **“He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”** And you could say, *‘he who loves his job more than me is not worthy of me, he who loves his relationship more than me isn't worthy of me.’* Or you fill in the blank. **“And he who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me, and he who has found his life”** -- like the world says, *‘you've got it all man’* -- he says, **‘no they'll lose it.’** But the person who's willing to walk away from it all, that's what it takes, like Abraham did -- **“shall find it.”** Earlier I said, you know, **‘If you're not willing to leave, then maybe this isn't the church for you.’** What I meant was, if you're defiant, if you're saying *‘I'm not going to do it’*, you've got a hard heart. That's what I'm talking about. You're going to have trouble. But if you're in that struggle right now, trying to know what God wants you to do, step out in faith. It's not until you step out that the waters part. And when you do you'll see God is a God who delivers. Not always the way you think, he doesn't tell you what he's going to do three months from now, he doesn't always tell you how he's going to do it. But if you're involved in something that you know, you know God wants you out of, I would encourage you to obey. Mary's words to the servants at the wedding feast [Yeshua's first miracle], **“hey guys, whatever he tells you to do, Do it.”** [transcript of a connective expository sermon on Romans 4:17-25, given by Pastor J. Mark Martin, Calvary Community Church, P.O. Box 39607, Phoenix, Arizona 85069]