

(Romans) Believing Not Working

by Brian Brodersen

Salvation is a gift of God, and it is received through faith in Jesus Christ, not through our own efforts or works.

Duration: 49:50

Scripture: Genesis 15:6, Matthew 7:28-29, Romans 4:2-8, Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:4-5

Topics: "Justification By Faith", "Salvation Theology"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the idea that people are inherently good and that doing one's best is enough for salvation. He shares a personal anecdote about receiving a massage as a birthday gift from his daughter. The preacher also mentions a missionary named Frank who questioned whether God would send certain people to hell. He then goes on to explain that everyone is without excuse and that even those who have never heard the gospel still have knowledge of a Creator. The preacher concludes by stating that Paul's message of justification by faith is not in conflict with the Old Testament and seeks to clear up Jewish misunderstandings.

Transcript

All right, so as we come now to the fourth chapter of this great epistle to the Romans, Paul has been laying down and has laid down the principle of justification by faith, and now he's going to proceed to show that this has been God's way of justifying men all along. You see, the Jews had completely misunderstood the message of the Old Testament, and it was because of this misunderstanding that they felt that the gospel was somehow in conflict with the Old Testament. They felt that Paul's message was contradicting what they had understood or what they had learned in the Old Testament, so Paul is seeking to clear up these Jewish misunderstandings, and of course in doing that at that time he's basically he's clearing these things up for for all time, and he spends a lot of time and effort really just looking at this issue from every conceivable angle really, and the point is ultimately to show men once and for all in every culture under every system that salvation is not anything that can be worked for or attained through human effort.

It's something that is the gift of God. It's something that's actually always been the gift of God, so he's already shown, and just to you know it's been a while since we've been together, so let's just refresh our memory a bit. He's also shown that or he's already shown that although this righteousness that he preaches through faith in Christ is separate from the law, yet remember he said it was witnessed to by the law and the prophets.

This message was contained in the law and the prophets, and we looked at how that was the case. Now he also said that the gospel does not make void the law. You see the Jews, you have to understand these are people that for some you know 1,500 years approximately the law has been the the center of their entire life, their entire existence, and so they can't understand how it could be possible that this law that did indeed come from God that it would not at least play some sort of a role in their salvation, and because of that they they misinterpret a lot of what Paul says.

So they think that Paul's saying the law is worthless, the law is useless, the law we might as well just you know throw it out or maybe we never should have had it, and Paul goes to great length to show no I'm not saying those kinds of things. He says we don't make void the law through faith of the gospel, but rather we establish the true purpose of the law. You see that was their whole problem.

Their problem was they misunderstood the law. They misinterpreted it. They thought it was to make them righteous, but it was never intended to do that, and so Paul says that we established the law.

The gospel reveals the true purpose of the law. Remember the law is the schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. That was the ultimate purpose of the law to show a man that he cannot be saved through human effort because he can't live up to the requirement that God has laid down.

So now to prove his point that a man is justified by faith alone apart from works, Paul is going to use two of the greatest men in the history of the Jewish nation to prove his point. He's going to go back to Abraham, the great patriarch, the father of the nation, of course whom the Jews honored, revered, respected. Their link to Abraham was vital in their minds.

He's going back to Abraham, and he's also going back to their great king David. Now before we look at what Paul says about Abraham and David, let me just say that this idea that a man is saved by doing some sort of work is not an exclusively Jewish problem. It is basically the perspective of every single religion on the planet with the only exception being biblical Christianity.

And I have to use the term biblical Christianity because the reality is there's a lot of Christianity in the world that's not biblical, so I guess you could ultimately say it's not really Christianity. But it goes under the banner of Christianity. And even amongst people who are, I think, truly Christian, there is quite often still the misconception that somehow I'm working my way to heaven.

I even know good sincere Christian people who occasionally will just sort of let it slip out like, you know, I hope I make it. I don't know if I'm gonna make it. Well, if you say stuff like that, then it's an indicator that you don't understand how you get to heaven in the first place.

It's an indicator that you're still somehow thinking that you're making some sort of a contribution. You have no contribution to make. There's nothing you can do with the exception of believing.

And so again, I want you to see that this isn't, you know, we're not merely doing a historical study about what those, you know, misled Jews believed back in the first century. This is an ongoing issue, and people all around us today assume that salvation is through works of some sort. So picking up now in the fourth chapter, looking at these two men, verses one through eight, let's read it.

What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Now to him who works, the wages

are not counted as grace, but as debt.

But to him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works. Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, or impute sin. So here's the two examples. Abraham, faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.

He believed God, and God said, that's a righteous man. David, of course, we know most of us a little bit about David's history. David is a great man.

He's a godly man. He's the man after God's heart, but he's a man who stumbles. He's a man who falls.

He's a man who sins, and David commits not just some little sins here and there. David commits some pretty major sins, some serious sins. Sins that would have, under any other circumstances, not only disqualified him from his position as king, but actually brought the death sentence upon him.

But God had mercy upon David, and so David writes in the 32nd Psalm, which Paul quotes here, blessed is the man whose lawless deeds are forgiven. See, David's not, he's not putting any hope or any confidence whatsoever in his ability to do the right thing. He's already completely blown that.

So his, his hope, his trust is in the fact that God is merciful, and he doesn't impute sin. Now notice this one thing that Paul says here. In reference to Abraham, in verse 3, he asks this question, and this is the primary question.

What does the scripture say? That's what we always have to go back to. Now, I think most of us know and understand that, but maybe for some of you, you haven't quite grasped that yet, but know that, understand that. It doesn't matter what the church says or has said.

It doesn't matter what certain theologians have said. It doesn't matter what the early church fathers said. And I bring those things up because quite often, people make an appeal to those things.

Oh, well, the church told me this. The church can give you the wrong information. Oh, well, the theologians say this.

The theologians can give you the wrong information. Oh, but you know, the church fathers, they believe this. The church fathers were men, just like us, and capable of being wrong, and absolutely were wrong on many points.

The scriptures are the only infallible authoritative word, because the scriptures are not men's words. They're God's words. All scripture is given by inspiration of God.

So when it comes to issues of salvation, when it comes to issues of life, when it comes to issues of morality, all these things, we have got to go back and say, what are the scriptures saying? That's where we find the answers. And that's what the apostle Paul does. Like Jesus before him, you know, Paul, you remember, Paul was a rabbi.

And the rabbinic method of teaching was to never interject any strong personal position, but to always defer back to some other authority, and in most cases, sort of endlessly referring to the rabbinic authorities. But remember, when Jesus comes on the scene, Jesus, he doesn't quote the rabbis. He just speaks loud and clear for himself, and it blew the people's minds.

He said, oh my, he speaks with authority. And even the demons obey him. That's serious authority.

And the apostles, they followed suit. They didn't go around quoting the rabbis, current or ancient. They went right back to the scriptures.

So what do the scriptures say about this subject? And Paul appeals back to Genesis with Abraham, and he appeals back to the life of David. Now, he tells us some vitally important things here. He tells us in verse 4 something that we need to understand about works and grace, and that is that they are mutually exclusive.

You see, you cannot mix those two things. They don't mix in any way. Now, interestingly, the Roman Catholic Church, for example, has sought to mix them.

And if you speak to a Roman Catholic theologian, you speak to a Roman Catholic priest, or you speak to a Roman Catholic person who's knowledgeable in their religion, or let's just say you speak to a guy who's just culturally a Catholic, most of them have the exact same perspective. When they think of salvation, they think of it as something that, of course, God, you know, it is a gift from God, but you make a contribution. You've got to add something to it.

So in their mind, it is a matter, and they will they will lay it out. It's a matter of faith and works, is what they'll say. Now, we'll talk about that at length next week, but verse 4 tells us, now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace, but as debt.

See, in other words, what he's saying is if you're working for it, then it can't possibly be of grace, because the minute you try to merit something, then grace is out of the picture. Grace means God does it all, or he does nothing. That's it.

It's all or nothing. It's not a mix of the two. It's either or.

Of course, it's only one, really, because the other option doesn't work. But in verse 5, and this is a great, great verse. I love this verse, and I've had many, many opportunities in speaking with people, in sharing the gospel of people, to bring this verse to bear upon the issue, the conversation.

He says, but to him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. Now, there are three things that are told us here about the justified man. The justified man is the man who's declared righteous, the man who stands guiltless before God.

That's a justified man. Three things about him. First thing, notice, he does not work.

The justified man does not work. William Newell, in his Romans commentary, he said this. He said, what is written here, every believer should commit to memory, for it states what no mind of fallen man ever imagines.

For do not people naturally believe that the way to be saved is by doing good works. See, no fallen mind ever imagines such a thing. It's true.

All you gotta do is study the religions of the world, which were invented by the fallen minds of men. And in every case, and not only in religion, but when it comes to philosophy, when it comes to even an ethical sort of a thing, it's always based upon a works type of an approach to things. So this is, to me, this whole issue of the grace of God is one of the powerful proofs for the divine origin of this gospel message, because human beings wouldn't think this up.

They never did. They never have. And still today, they just say, wait, no, it can't be that.

That's way too easy. You know, it's funny. Sometimes with the gospel, I've had people tell me, you lay out the gospel, they say, oh man, that's too hard.

Sometimes you lay it out, they say, oh, that's too easy. So which is it? Is it too hard or is it too easy? Well, God has made salvation simple. Why did he do that? Because he wants people to be saved.

God's not trying to hide salvation from people. He's not trying to keep people out of the kingdom. He wants them to come in.

So he makes salvation simple. The hard part is that our human pride opposes this means of salvation, because we want to make a contribution. At the end of the day, I want to think that somehow there was something that I added to the equation of salvation, but he says that the justified man does not work.

Now this is what the Bible says really clearly. And it is astounding to me that many in the Christian church still don't get it. But that just shows you really that there is an incredible amount of biblical ignorance among Christian people.

Listen to what Paul said in Ephesians 2, 8 and 9, passage that you're probably familiar with. For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

In Titus chapter 3, verses 4 and 5, Paul said, but when the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he has saved us. I mean, can it get any clearer than that? Now to him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. By grace you have been saved through faith, not of yourselves.

It's a gift of God, not by works of righteousness. How many times does God have to say it? But yet this idea of being saved by your own effort is so ingrained in man, God had to say it over and over and over again. Did you know that the Bible is quite repetitious really? It says a few things over and over and over and over and over again.

What does that tell you about us? It tells you that we got a real problem with being thick in the head and God's got to just keep driving the same thing home to us over and over and over again. So the justified man does not work. Secondly, what does he do? He believes on him who justifies.

Jesus was approached by the men of his day and they wanted to know what they might do to do the work of God in the context of John chapter 6. He said, speaking to them, Jesus said, do not labor for the food which perishes but for the food which endures to everlasting life which the Son of Man will give you because God the Father has set a seal on him. Then they said to him, what shall we do that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said to them, this is the work of God that you believe in the one

whom he has sent. That's the only work you can do.

That's it. Nothing else. You want to work for God? Believe in Jesus Christ.

That's the only work that God will accept. So the justified man is a man who believes and again that's what Abraham did. God came to Abraham.

He made certain promises to him and in Genesis 15 6 we read, and Abraham believed God and then it says, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness. Thirdly, the justified man is the man who acknowledges that he is indeed ungodly and this is probably where the real difficulty comes in because it's just part of our human nature to think that we're okay, to think that we're better than we actually are. It is very difficult for us to admit that we're wrong, to admit that we're in need, to admit that we can't do this thing on our own and this is the thing that keeps people out of heaven, believe it or not.

This is the main thing that keeps people out of heaven. People just simply refuse to believe that they're bad enough to need somebody else to save them. They just think, well, you know, I'm just, I'm not that bad.

You know, it's amazing how twisted our human nature is and it doesn't take long before it begins to show. You don't have to be an aggressively sinful person or an overtly wicked person. You just have to be a person.

That's it. It's right there. It's just in the constitution of man.

My youngest son, Brayden, he's 14 now, and I'll tell you, he is a wonderful kid. He's just a great, great kid but from the time that he was little, you just could not get him to admit he was wrong about anything and I remember times just trying to get him to say that he was wrong and to apologize and he just would sit there, just just would not do it and then a little bit later when he got a little bit brighter, a little bit older, he didn't just sit there and refuse to do it. He had all kinds of philosophical reasons why that really wasn't the case with him and I would look at him and think this is amazing.

This is an amazing study in human nature. He just could not be wrong and we all know that that's true with us too, isn't it? You think of how many times I have been fighting with my wife knowing I'm wrong but I'm never going to let her know that I know I'm wrong. There's no way and that's just the way it is and of course, on those levels, it can be fairly benign.

It can be very dangerous as well but when you take it to the level of God and man, that's when it becomes a life or death situation because the only way any of us will ever get to heaven is by admitting that we can't get there ourselves, that we are ungodly. You know, when the Bible says to confess, the word confess, it literally means to say the same thing about. So when you confess that you're a sinner, what you're actually doing is you're saying the same thing about yourself that God has already said.

You're saying amen. God says your heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. You're saying amen.

That's true. It's right. I'm agreeing with that.

I'm confessing to that. Jesus Christ came to save sinners. As long as a man persists in thinking that he is basically good or that he can somehow do something to earn God's favor, he will remain condemned.

That's heavy. You know, today, of course, it is very, very unpopular to talk about condemnation, to insinuate that there's a judgment or to come out bluntly and say that there's a hell and God's going to send people there. Oh, that just gets people up in arms, not just people out in the world.

It gets people in the church upset. People become angry. Out the missions conference, Frank drowned as he was sharing with us.

He shared his story of 37 years with the Shuara Indians, and he in his first session, he he went back to the first chapter of Romans and he asked this question. He he asked the question, would God really send people like those people? Would he really send them to hell? That was the question that he asked. That was the that was the question that he posed.

And he concluded, yes, he would. And these are the reasons why. Just as Paul said, men are without excuse.

And he went on to build this case. He went on to show that those people know a lot more than you would think that they knew. And these people had never had in their history to to their knowledge to date, they had never heard the gospel in their history.

But these are the things that they knew. They knew there was a creator. They lived in the jungle.

They knew that somebody had to make the jungle. Somebody had to make the Andes Mountains there that rose up above. Somebody had to make, you know, the animals and the plants and all of that.

They intuitively knew that there was a creator. They also knew and had in their history legends about a fall from heaven. They also had a legend about the flood, a worldwide flood.

They also knew that they were wrong. And this is the amazing thing. They also knew they were going to hell.

They didn't call it hell, but they knew and they actually had in their legends that when a person dies there up in the Andes, I don't remember which mountain it was, but it's an active volcano that their spirits are taken and deposited into the volcano. And Frank, you know, just went on to show how just as the scripture said, men are without excuse because that which may be known of God is manifest in them for God has shown it to them. And that even though they lived sinful lives and knew that they would one day go to hell for it, they had no salvation option.

They didn't know the gospel. Then, of course, the gospel came to them and he told us a number of stories of men who heard the gospel and simply rejected it. So, this whole thing here, you know, this idea that people are basically good and that if you just do your best, everything's going to be okay.

It is really, it's a universal idea. My daughter works at the St. Regis Hotel in San Francisco and she works at the spa there. And so, for my birthday this past week, they gave me a massage for my birthday.

Now, you know, it was really the last thing I wanted to do, but your kids give it to you, what are you going to say? No, I don't want this birthday present. Get me, you know, some construction boots or something. I'm not going to a spa and getting a massage.

That's for sissies, you know, but I had to go through with it anyway. And I'm glad I did. It was a great experience.

But in the course of the massage, the guy that was doing the massage was a French guy. And so, I had a great opportunity, you know, with a European connection. We got to talking and I've been to France and done some things there and, you know, lived in Europe and all that.

So, we had a great conversation and I got to share the Lord with him. But it was interesting as I was sharing the Lord with him and kind of, you know, sharing with him some of the statements of Jesus. All of the sudden, he did it graciously, but all of a sudden, he just retreated into this.

Oh, well, you know, if you just, I know if, you know, I just be a good person and I try to help other people. And he just basically went into an explanation of his view of how he's going to be saved. And it was, he wasn't so much saying, I don't need Jesus.

He was just more saying, you know, I don't think I need that. I'm glad you've got that, but this is what I'm doing and I think I'll be okay. Now, he's representative of most people walking around this planet today.

That's exactly what they think. But the justified man knows this about himself, that he is ultimately, truly ungodly. That's the man that gets justified and who recognizes I have sinned and I have fallen, I have fallen short of the glory of God.

Remember back in the first chapter, we talked about all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And remember, we pointed out how ungodliness is any failure, any failure whatsoever to live up to God's perfect standard. That's what ungodliness is.

Any failure to think, any failure to act, any failure to desire to do God's perfect will constitutes ungodliness. And what does it say? The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness. So there's only two possibilities.

There's either admitting we're ungodly and receiving God's grace that'll save us or insisting that we're not as bad as God thinks we are. And in that case, we end up under the wrath of God. But of course, that's why the gospel has come.

So we would not have to experience the wrath of God. Now, Paul goes on and I want to go on through the 22nd verse real quickly. And we're going to come back and cover those next week too, but from a bit of a different angle.

But let's go on and just read a couple of things here. As he says in verse 9, he says, now does this blessedness then come upon the circumcision only? So of course, this is another issue because Paul has been saying now that this salvation is not just for Jews. This is something that God is offering to Gentiles.

And the thing that was really irritating the Jews was that Paul was insinuating that the Gentiles could come to God in the same way the Jews could and have a relationship on an equal footing. You see, under the Jewish system and the Jewish mindset, even a proselyte, even a Gentile who converted to Judaism was still somewhat of a second-class citizen. You had to be born into it to really experience the ultimate benefits.

Paul is saying with the gospel, no, the Gentiles are their joint heirs with Christ. The middle wall of partition is broken down. So does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only? So Paul's talking about this blessedness of God's grace.

Is this for Jews only? Is it for the circumcised only? Or does it also come upon the uncircumcised? Now listen to what he does. And this is where you see how Paul so brilliantly argues from the scriptures. And this is where we get encouragement to know the scriptures ourselves because, you know, guys, I'll tell you, more and more I realize that when we are in, you know, situations to discuss with people or to argue with them if need be, we've got to know the scriptures.

That's our authority as we argue with people. It's not how I feel about it, what I think about it. You know, a lot of times today people come up, hey, you're a Christian, right? Yeah.

Hey, well, what do you think about this? You know, it's a wise thing to say, well, you know, what I think about it doesn't necessarily matter. Let me tell you what God thinks about it. I'll just tell you right here from his word.

Because my opinion, it could be right, but it could be wrong. But at the end of the day, to some extent, it's just my opinion. Paul always went back to the scriptures, and he does that brilliantly here.

So, for we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised or while uncircumcised. You see, of course, the Jews put a heavy emphasis on circumcision as well.

But Paul is just, he's, you know, exploding all of these things that they're putting their trust in. He's showing that Abraham, his declaration by God of being righteous happened to him before he was even circumcised. He was a Gentile.

You know, Abraham actually was a Gentile. He was a Chaldean. He's a Babylonian.

Of course, he was the one who was called, and from his descendants came a new nation. But he was technically a Gentile. So, it was while he was uncircumcised, and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, who are not only Jewish in the physical sense, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.

So you see, what Paul is doing is he's just, he's knocking out from under them everything that they're hoping in to justify themselves, and that's a good way to approach people in reaching out to them. You know, people have preconceived ideas and presuppositional things, and they build their hopes on those things. One approach in evangelism is to knock all those things out from underneath them, and then to show them, look, you really don't, you don't have a basis for what you're, you're resting in, you're hoping in.

He then says, for the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham and his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect, because the law brings about wrath. For where there is no law, there is no transgression.

Therefore, if it is of faith that it, therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations.

In the presence of him whom he believed, God who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did.

So Paul moves from circumcision right down to the law. He says, look, the law didn't have any part in Abraham's justification. The law didn't even exist.

And if God later added the law on as a requirement for salvation, then the promises that he made to Abraham are nullified. Of course, his argument is God didn't nullify his promises to Abraham. They still stand.

What Paul is really arguing for is that the what he's describing in the gospel is the same thing Abraham knew as a way of salvation. So you see, they're saying, Paul, you're bringing something new. Paul, you're contradicting Moses.

You're opposing the law. Paul says, no, I'm not. But let me explain to you.

Abraham was saved exactly the same way. I'm telling you, you need to be saved. He wasn't saved by circumcision.

He wasn't saved by the law. He was declared righteous before he was circumcised and the law didn't come till 400 years later. So and then he goes on to hear just speak of Abraham, what he that personal manifestation of his faith.

He says, as it is written, I have made you the father of many nations in the presence of him whom he believed, God who gives life to the dead, calls those things which do not exist as though they did, who contrary to hope, this is Abraham contrary to hope in hope, believed so that he became the father of many nations according to what was spoken. So shall your descendants be and not being weak in faith. He did not consider his own body already dead since he was about a hundred years old and the deadness of Sarah's womb.

He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God and being fully convinced that what he had promised, he was also able to perform. Therefore, it was accounted to him for righteousness. So he establishes his case, Abraham believed, and then he goes on and he says this.

He says, all of this was not written down simply to inform us about Abraham. It was written so we would know how a man is justified. You see, Abraham is a living illustration of how God saves people.

He justifies them by faith. Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Now, real quickly, we're going to close here in just a second, but real quickly, just sort of a little bit of a diversion, but look with me at what it says about Abraham.

It says, and not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body already dead. You know, God has called us to live by faith. He's called us to a life of faith and faith is only exercised when there is inability on the human level.

When I'm incapable, faith is what you set against impossibilities. Faith is what overcomes impossibilities. Now, Abraham was a hundred years old.

Sarah was 90 years old. It wasn't humanly possible that they were going to have a child. They were beyond their ability to do that, but it says that Abraham, he wasn't weak in faith.

He didn't take the human limitation and settle into that. Instead, he believed that God was greater than his human limitation. And he believed that God's promise would overrule his human limitation.

And you see, that's very important for us guys, because God's calling us to live a life of faith. And when he calls us to live a life of faith, he puts us in circumstances that are oftentimes far beyond us. Many times he puts us in impossible situations.

Now, why does he put you in an impossible situation? So you can exercise faith. You see, if you can figure it out, if you can do it, guess what you don't need? You don't need any faith. Now, quite honestly, sometimes I think, Lord, if you don't mind, I'll just pass on the faith thing.

Let's just take the easy road. But it's not the way it works. God says, no, I want to show myself strong in your life.

So I'm going to bring some impossibilities your way, and you're going to trust me, and you're going to see that nothing is impossible for the Lord. But you see, the key is trusting him, believing him, and believing that just what he did with Abraham and Moses and David and the prophets and the apostles and the saints, he wants to do with me today in the 21st century. God is not done working.

He's still at work. There's still a big world that needs to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we're the people that are here on the planet at this time with that task, and we've got to have faith that God's going to work in our lives. He's going to work through our lives.

Don't fall into the trap of looking at yourself, looking at your inadequacies, and saying, well, there's not much that can be done here. Abraham didn't do that. If he would have concentrated on the physical limitations, he never would have gotten anywhere.

But he just looked beyond it and said, God, I believe your promise. I believe you're greater than my limitations. And then it says that he did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but he was strengthened in faith, and he gave glory to God.

He simply believed that if God said it, then God would do it. Didn't know how it would be done. That wasn't his problem.

Frank Drown told the story this week. It's in his book, and I remember reading it. He was broadcasting or attempting to broadcast teaching into the Indian tribes from his little base there, and he had been doing this by occasionally having supplies flown in of diesel fuel, and they had a generator, and this is how they would, you know, have their electricity to get their signal out, so the people could pick up the Bible teaching on the radio.

But it was very expensive. It was very difficult, and oftentimes, it would run out of fuel, and they wanted to expand the radio ministry, and he was out in the river one day when the tributaries of the Amazon, and as they were fishing there, and he'd been there for many years. All of a sudden, he came around this corner, and he'd never seen this before, but there was a little waterfall, and he followed the river, and there was another little waterfall, and he followed the river.

There was another little waterfall, and suddenly in his mind, he thought, I wonder if we could harness this water flow to produce electricity, and he said, you know, the funny thing was, he said, I wasn't an engineer. I was a farmer, but that thought came into my mind, and so he became convinced that that was what God was calling him to do, so he contacted the mission headquarters, and they sent an engineer out, and he surveyed it, and he said, this would work. You could actually do it here.

Well, okay, great. This will work. How do we do it? I mean, I don't know how to build it.

We don't have any supplies. The nearest road is 55 miles away. You can't get materials in here.

All of these, you know, crazy things, and he said that during those days, one of the things that he would do is he was building an airstrip so the MAF, the Missionary Aviation Fellowship pilots could come in and bring supplies and all that, so he said one day as he was working on his airstrip, suddenly this huge plane that he had never seen before passed over him, and for three or four days, this huge plane passed over, a C-330 or something like that, and he said he looked up in the sky, and he said, Lord, I need that plane. God, give me that plane. God gave him that plane, and it's a long story, and we don't have time to go into it tonight.

It's incentive to buy that book and read the story. It's a great story, but to make a long story short, he, through some connections, found out who owned the plane. It was owned by a certain company, and he went up, and he told the guys what he was planning to do, and they said, well, you know, we'd like to help you, and there's all kinds of interesting things about how he got all the equipment back in Iowa and all this wild stuff, but to make a long story short, when the plane was bringing in the supplies, it crashed and was there, you know, burned right there on his runway, and the insurance company paid the people the three million dollars for it.

They didn't want it. He took the parts from that plane, and that's what he built his hydroelectric system with there, and you know, it's just amazing, but his whole point was, you know, God's able to supply whatever you need, even if you're out in the middle of the jungle, and that's true. That's true.

He did not waver at the promise of God, but he was strengthened, giving glory to God, and this is it, being fully convinced that what he promised he was able to perform. God wants us to be convinced. First of all, in our overall context tonight, he wants us to be convinced of our salvation.

God said, if you believe in my son, Jesus Christ, you shall be saved, and he wants us to, by faith, lay hold of that and rest in that and live in that confidence, but then from that place, he wants to take us out into works of service, into exploits, into the expansion of his kingdom, and all of that happens by faith too, and it all comes down to this, being fully convinced at what God promised he's able to do, and what did God promise? God promised that he would fill us with his Holy Spirit, and he would get his work accomplished in and through our lives, and even though we might feel inadequate, even though we might think that, you know, I'm not really capable, I'm not really a candidate, I'm not bright enough, I'm not strong enough, I'm not in, you know, I don't have enough ingenuity or whatever, none of that matters, because it's God, the God who created the universe, created us, and he's the one who's created the work and given us the commission and empowers us to go out into it, and just this last word, guys, in closing, you know, in coming back with this new year, I'm excited because I really feel like the Lord's given me, even more so than I had three months ago, I feel like the Lord's given me fresh vision for what God wants to do here with us, guys, as a ministry, as the men of Calvary Chapel, and I don't know what the details are right now, and I know that God is going to develop that as time goes on, but this is, the bottom line is, I know God wants

to use us, I know God wants us to serve him, I know that he's got good works that he wants us to walk in, I know that some of you guys, God is going to raise you up, equip you, he's going to send you out, you're going to become a blessing to people in other places, I know for others, there's plenty of ministry and work to be done right here in our own fellowship, in our own community, and I'm excited as we move ahead in faith to see what God's going to do, because, you know, it's not, you know, the Christian life is not a spectator sport, is it?

It's not about sitting around watching somebody else do it, it's about digging in, and being part of the team, and getting in the game, and letting God work in and through our lives, so he's going to do that, and I'm excited about that, so, and I'm really excited that we got through this study without any problems. So, all right, let's pray. Father, we thank you for your love, your grace, your great gift of salvation, and Lord, if there's a single guy with us tonight that hasn't received that grace that brings salvation, Lord, may they open their heart, even this evening, just confessing that they are indeed sinners, and Lord, that they need you to save them, may they open their hearts and cry out to you, may you come in and do a work in their lives, and Lord, use us, I pray you'd use us here in our fellowship, use us in our community, use us at home, and in our neighborhoods, and on the job, and Lord, we pray for a harvest of souls, we pray, Lord, that more men would be drawn into your kingdom, and that you would use us as a fellowship, as a body of men to reach out to others, and so, Lord, even now as we gather to encourage one another in our groups, bless that time, we pray in Jesus' name, amen.

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