

When Faith Breaks Down

by Jim Cymbala

Faith is the key to pleasing God and God's grace and mercy are available to us even when we fail.

Duration: 18:01

Scripture: Romans 4:1

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of faith and trust in God. He uses the example of Abraham to illustrate how even the strongest believers can experience moments of doubt and make mistakes. The preacher highlights that God's acceptance of Abraham was not based on his actions, but on his faith. He also emphasizes that all humans are prone to making mistakes and falling short, but God's grace and forgiveness are always available.

Transcript

I felt like the Lord laid something in my heart that I'm supposed to give to you tonight. Romans 4 verse 1, what shall we say then of Abraham, the father of our race? What was his experience? If he was put right with God by the things he did, he would have something to boast about, but not in God's sight. The scripture says, Abraham believed God, and because of his faith, God accepted him as righteous.

Why did God accept him as righteous? Because of what? By what he did or by his faith? A person who works is paid wages, but they are not regarded as a gift. They are something that has been earned. So the Bible tells us that the man that I'm going to be teaching about for the next few days is, transcends the Old Testament.

He's not like Elijah. He's not like Jeremiah or Joshua. He transcends all of them.

Why? Because when Paul wants to explain what Christianity is all about, that we are accepted by God by faith and not by our works. No one is going to heaven because they've lived a good life. Not one.

We go to heaven. We're saved. We're forgiven by God because of faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, the law that was given to Moses happened 400 years after Abraham lived, roughly. So in this argument that Paul makes in a couple of places in the New Testament, he says, no, Abraham is the father of us all, not just the Jewish people, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, et cetera. No, no, no, no.

He's the father of everyone who believes because God said to him, I'm going to make you the father of many nations. And it wasn't just by the wives that he married. He became the spiritual father of not just the Jewish people, but he's the father of the people who have put their faith in Jesus Christ.

In fact, the Bible says a true Jew, a true Hebrew is not one who's just biologically a Jew. A true Jew is one that has the faith that Abraham had. And the Gentile who has faith like Abraham had is more of a Jew than the Jew who doesn't have faith.

How many get it? Say amen. So Abraham is the model and he's the only one who's called father. He's called the father, Abraham, the father of everyone who believes whatever color you are, whatever background, Abraham's your father.

He's our example. He's the first one that had said this about, and Abraham believed God and his faith was counted for righteousness. He was accepted by God because of his faith.

Now the law was added later, not to save anyone, but to just show us how sinful we are. For by the works of the law, no one will ever be accepted by God. So the law was added just to get us down to helplessness and hopelessness so we could put our faith in Jesus Christ.

Most people don't hang on to a savior until they think they're totally sinking. So that's why the law was added and all the sacrifice system of the Hebrew nation. So Abraham is this guy who lived in Ur of the Chaldees and he was an idolater.

He was a total idolater and so was his father, Terah. And out of nowhere, God out of his sovereign choice appeared to Abraham and said, Abraham, leave where you are and go to a place I'm going to show you. And I'm going to bless you and make you a blessing.

Anyone who curses you will be cursed and whoever blesses you will be blessed and I will be with you and so on and so forth. And the Bible says, Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees, which is far east of the land of Canaan, Palestine, Israel. And he started going out, the Bible tells us in Hebrews, not knowing where he was going.

He had such a faith in God. Notice there was no verse to stand on. There was no Bible verse that he believed.

God somehow was experienced by him and he heard the voice of God saying, get up and go. And it's a mystery. Why did God choose him? What would make his descendants so special? That's the sovereignty of God.

Was it because he was a good little boy? He was not. He was an idolater. That's confirmed later on.

So Abraham goes out with his wife, Sarah. They have no children. She's barren.

He's old and they take off with their nephew, Lot and the few herds that they have. And they go into the land. They don't know where they're stopping.

They don't know where they're going. There's no map. There's no GPS.

There's nothing. They're just, they're just trucking. When they get to the land of Israel, Canaan, God speaks to them and appears to them around verse seven and says, this is the land I'm going to give you,

but not to you.

I'm going to give it to your descendants. You're never going to live here in a house. You're going to just be moving around in a tent.

And he kept believing God later on. God tells them, you know, I'm going to, I'm going to make your descendants as many as the stars in the sky and the pieces of dust in the ground. And Abraham is going, I don't have one child.

Why don't we start with one? And by now Sarah is no spring chicken. She's older and she has, she's barren and he's an old man. And God keeps telling them, here's what I'm going to do.

Here's what I'm going to do. Here's what I'm going to do. You're going to have children.

And Abraham believed God. He believed in God, which is the main thing. As I said, last Tuesday, the whole goal of the Bible of God's purpose for us is to get us to believe that's how a person becomes a Christian.

That's how you follow in the footsteps of Abraham, not trying trusting we've twisted religion, especially Christianity and made it a trying religion. It's not about trying. What are you going to try with? Haven't you found out like that? I have that.

I can make promises and try and I fail every time. How many have that track record in your life? Right? So it's about trusting, believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ, and you'll be saved. The just shall live by faith without faith.

It's impossible to please God. So Abraham is this guy that starting in Genesis 12, we follow his story and the older he gets and Sarah gets, and there's no kids. The more God is putting promises on him.

And somehow he keeps believing he's the father of everyone who believes his faith was counted to him. The counting term, his faith was applied to him as righteousness by trusting God. Remember there was no sacrifices yet.

There was no mosaic ritual system yet. There was no Jesus dying on a cross, but by trusting in God, it was counted to his account, put on his account. You're righteous and perfect in my sight.

Why? Because he was? No, because he believed. Oh, can we receive that tonight? How many are happy to receive that? Lift your hand up that the just shall live by faith. If we're going to go by our track record, we're lost.

Aren't you like me? Don't you mess up every other day or so? Do I get a witness here or am I, I'm the only human person here. The rest are angels. So, but here's the lesson that God encouraged me that I think I'm supposed to share with you.

So now let's look right after he comes to the land, after God tells him what he's going to do, watch what happens. But there was a famine in Canaan, and it was so bad that Abraham went farther South to Egypt to live there for a while. Did God tell him to no record of it? When he was about to cross the border into Egypt, he said to his wife, Sarah, you are a beautiful woman.

When the Egyptians see you, they will assume that you're my wife, which she was. And so they will kill me and let you live. Well, wait a minute.

Didn't God say he was going to do all these things? How could they kill him? He didn't have any children yet. God said he would have a bunch of children. Did he not? How are they going to kill him? Tell them that you're my sister.

Lie. Then because of you, they will let me live and treat me well. When he crossed the border into Egypt, isn't that something? When he got out of God's will and went where God didn't tell him, the minute he crossed the border, he started lying.

There's a lesson for us in that. Am I correct? The Egyptians did see that his wife was beautiful. She was a looker.

Some of the court officials saw her and told the King how beautiful she was. So she was taken to his palace. Because of her, the King treated Abraham well because he would eventually need the older brother's, he thought brother, older brother's permission to have her and gave him flocks of sheep and goats, cattle, donkeys, slaves, and camels.

But because the King had taken Sarah, the Lord sent terrible diseases on him and on the people of his palace. Then the King sent for Abraham and asked him, what have you done to me? Why didn't you tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say she was your sister and let me take her as my wife? Here is your wife. Take her and get out.

Notice here, a Pharaoh, a non-Hebrew man is rebuking one of the greatest names in the Bible. And guess who was right? Pharaoh. And now the King gave orders to his men.

So they took Abraham and put him out of the country together with his wife and everything he owned. All that cattle, all those sheep, all those possessions, and servants it says. What do we learn from this that I want to leave you as we dismiss? That the people who have the strongest faith in the world also know what it means to break down.

And if you've broken down in your faith and quit on God and given up and done something stupid because you don't trust him, then get up and start trusting him again. Because God calls Abraham his friend. Notice God doesn't give Abraham what he deserves.

He should have been shot. Didn't have guns then. He still should have been shot, right? For giving his wife up to Pharaoh.

But does God have him punished according to what he did? Does God give him what he deserves? This is all a picture of grace in Jesus Christ. Did God give him what he deserved? Hello? Yes or no? No. But notice the man who believed God and left his hometown, left everything he had, went out not knowing where he was going.

I'd say that's faith. And it's already been written about him. And Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.

Even someone as great as Abraham knew what it was under certain circumstances to totally bottom out. Have you ever had that moment? Have you ever trusted God, seen God do great things? And then a new

problem comes. And for some reason, faith went out the door.

And you don't have faith. And we get despondent and we get discouraged. Or we do things and say things that we never should have done.

In this case, he told a lie about who Sarah was and risked her life as it were. So that encourages me that God doesn't judge us by the failure of a moment. He looks at the direction of our lives.

And that's why I want to say to somebody here today, if you just hit a blip and fell down, get up in the name of Jesus. Get up and start trusting God again. Because what else, what is the other option? You're going to stay down there and we're going to feel bad for ourselves, sorry for ourselves.

And Satan is going to come and whisper, see, you really don't trust God. See, if you really trusted God, you wouldn't have done that. Well, Abraham really believed God.

He was the friend of God and look what he did. And he did other things. When his wife didn't have a baby right away, she talked him into this totally nutty plan of sleep with my servant, because I can't have a baby, but at least I can have one through my servant.

We all know where that went, right? All kinds of trouble. I'm glad God put that in the Bible. Why would he put that in the Bible? If you want to make a total hero of Abraham, he would have Abraham looking just super perfect.

How many are happy that the righteous man can fall six times, but he gets up seven? Come on, lift your hand up. How many are happy that we can believe God? And when we fail in a moment, we can get up and say, God, I'm going to trust you. Can we put our hands together and say amen to that? And now the final word, final word of our little Bible study, the way you and I would have it if we were God was shame on you, Abraham.

You risked Sarah. You don't trust me. Did I not appear to you? Did I not tell you I was going to give you the land to your children? How could you die before you have children? If I told you you're going to have children.

So you know what? I'm taking everything from you and I'm finding someone else. Oh, God is awesome. He's so full of grace and mercy that he sticks with Abraham.

And I'm so glad he did because that means he can stick with you and me. Amen. But no, but here's the icing on the cake.

When he leaves Egypt, which is a spiritual disaster, he has more blessings than he went into Egypt with. As they would say out in the street, that ain't right. To the logical mind, that ain't right.

Man messes up like that, risks his wife. You lower the boom on him. God says, no, I'm not like that.

I know that you're made of dust. I know how frail you are. And Abraham is my friend.

He'll come to, he'll get back on the horse again. He'll keep trusting me. So just to show him how much I love him, I'm going to give him more than he had before he went into Egypt.

I will confess something now in front of Almighty God and you. I have had God bless me and pour things into my life, grace, spiritual things, and at times physical things where God knows I have said to him, don't do it. I'm not worthy.

I don't know if that's ever happened to you. How many of you have ever been embarrassed by how God blesses you? Anybody here ever been like embarrassed by God? No, don't. And it's God's way of reminding us.

I don't bless you because of who you are. I bless you because of who I am. Can we just put our hands together and thank the Lord.

Everybody close your eyes. Lord, I thank you that you're with us. We thank you for your word tonight, that when we break down, you don't break down.

That when we falter, you don't falter. Great is thy faithfulness. Encourage anyone here, Lord, who's taken a little slip, but they really do love you.

They do trust you. They just messed up. Lift them up.

Encourage them today to keep trusting you like a child. Help them to cling to you. And Lord, we want to just thank you now for blessings that we don't even come close to deserving.

We don't deserve anything, Lord. Everything is by your grace, but sometimes you have absolutely embarrassed us by being so good to us when we're not at our very best and you know what we're talking about, God. So we just want to praise you and thank you for that.

Just like you did with Abraham, you've done for us. We pray this in Jesus' name.

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