

Gospel Driven Life - 2: The Promise-Driven Life

by Michael Horton

The promise-driven life is living by faith, trusting in God's promises and not our own efforts

Duration: 49:34

Topics: "Gospel Driven"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Romans 4 and the story of Abraham. He emphasizes that when God is the playwright, screenwriter, and lead actor, our lives become characters in his unfolding drama. The speaker discusses how we are wired for obedience but not redemption, and how we are drawn to glory stories and infomercials. He also briefly mentions Genesis 15 as the foundation for Paul's argument in Romans 4. Overall, the sermon encourages listeners to be driven by the gospel while being directed by the law.

Transcript

If you have your Bibles, turn with me to Romans 4. In contrast to all the stories we tell about ourselves, which usually really amounts to nothing more than a show about nothing, God retells our story. He re-narrates us, and we learn from the passages we'll be looking at here, how it is that when God is the playwright, the screenwriter, and the lead actor, we actually become characters in His unfolding drama. And His Word actually creates the world that it describes.

We begin with verse 1 of chapter 4 of Romans. What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather, 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 as righteousness.

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift, but as his due. And to the one who does not work, but trust him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works. Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin. And in verse 13, for the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if it is the adherence of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null, and the promise is void.

For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law, there is no transgression. This is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring, not only to the adherence of the law, but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. As it is written, I have made you the father of many nations, in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

In hope, he believed against hope that he should become the father of many nations. As he had been told, so shall your offspring be. He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead, since he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was counted to him as righteousness. But the words that were counted to him were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also.

It will be counted to us who believe in him, who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. Laid out on the couch a while back with the sickness. I didn't feel like doing anything.

Didn't feel like reading the newspaper or listening to the radio. I flipped on the TV and I started flipping, channel surfing. And it seemed like it was a Saturday.

It seems to be that Saturday is all infomercials. And so I suddenly became infomercials and watched one right after the other. I learned a lot from Susie Ormond.

And, for example, never knew who she was until this program and her steps to financial security bought that kid. And then Jake came on with his home gym. And I was about midway through dialing that one and Lisa found me with my wallet open and came running over to me as if it were the end of the world and released me from my bondage.

We all need gold. We gravitate toward this sort of thing. We are law creatures and this is good.

This is right because God wired us for obedience. He didn't wire us for redemption. He wired us for obedience.

That's how we're created. We're created in the image of God with all of the requisite abilities and excellencies and moral perfections that would be necessary for fulfilling the commission that God gave us in the beginning. And so it just stands to reason that we fall for glory stories.

You know, we fall for here is a great program and if you follow it, this is the outcome you can expect. Those are glory stories. There's a glory up at the end of that road because the ultimate glory story was the one that God gave to Adam.

If he would fulfill his trial, like a courtroom trial, if he would fulfill that trial, not only for himself and his wife, but for all of his posterity as the covenant head, he would win for all of us the right to eat from the tree of life. Not only would he be justified, but we would be justified as well. No one would ever die.

We would be confirmed in righteousness. No one could ever fall. The consummation that we expect when Jesus returns would have happened then and there.

It's a good glory story, the way it should have been. The law as the only delight. There was a time, yes, when the creature God made in his image had nothing greater he wanted to do that day than fulfill God's law.

Oh, how I love thy law, O Lord. All of that in Psalm 119. Adam could say and Eve could say as well.

And so it's natural to us to think in terms of motivation, exhortation. It's natural for us to think that the situation isn't really as bad as we think it is because we don't know about the fall and its seriousness. We know about its effects, but we don't know about the fall itself, the reason for the symptoms.

The fall itself or what God has done about it, apart from a report. No one has to report to little children this just in. Don't pull your sister's hair.

It's not news. I've said that a million times. I keep pulling my daughter's hair.

Say it a million times, I'll say it a million more times probably. It's never news. It never comes to them as a shocking.

What did he just say? Could it really be that I'm not supposed to pull my sister's hair? Of course they knew they're not supposed to pull their sister's hair. That's why they did it. And don't get the cookies.

They're not done yet. And of course, just by saying it sort of ex operato, it causes the children to go get the cookies. And see, that's the way it works.

Not because the law does that, but because we do that with the law. We twist it from its original intention. We do horrible, strange things to wonderful, good things.

And so this is why it's dangerous for us to live the purpose-driven life. We need purpose. We need goals.

We need aims. We need to know where we're supposed to go. And we need MapQuest to get us there.

We need directions. But we can't be driven by them. We can only be guided by them.

We have to be driven by something that gets us out of ourselves, fixing our eyes on Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. For that we need news. Not better programs that non-Christians can even come up with.

Non-Christians can realize even that maybe they were created for a purpose. There are a lot of people who don't believe in Christ who believe that they were made for a purpose. But this is only damning news, apart from the gospel.

Even when I hear in the great first question and answer of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, what is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. If my conscience is not bathed in the good news of the gospel, I hear that as nothing but bad news. I am created for the glory of God, to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Do I glorify Him as I should? No. Do I enjoy Him as I ought? No. Just look at how sometimes with great commitment and resolve, I have to get myself ready to go to church.

If I really enjoyed God as I should, I would be running out the door. And so often I find that it's a burden. It's a burden sometimes to sing in church.

Don't you find that? I guess I'm alone here, sort of twisting in the wind. Don't leave me alone here. You know, so it comes as horrible news.

Unless I hear of one who did glorify God and enjoyed Him forever in my place. And now, ironically, I can glorify God and enjoy Him. Because it comes to me now, not as condemnation, but as the good news that because someone has stood in that place for me, I can stand in that place in Him.

Before the Father. The gospel really makes us extroverts. You don't have to have someone bring you news.

That's why I think, again, the religion stories today are pretty boring. This church here is going to solve this social crisis. This movement, Christian movement over here is going to make that great thing happen over here.

Well, do you really need churches to do that? We have neighbors two doors down who are Muslim from Palestine. And their kids play with our kids all the time. And they're great parents.

And their kids are a little older than our kids. And they've taught them some really good habits. And they have great conversations about right and wrong and so forth.

And they get right and wrong about things that, you know, the moral core of the Ten Commandments and so forth. It's nice to see that it's not everything that you see in the news. Two of our best friends come into our life.

Happened to be my barber and his wife. They're atheists. And they're very close friends of ours.

And he reads these books. And he sees that he's mentioned and so forth. And he likes them.

So that's fine. But they taught us an enormous amount of stuff about raising kids. You know, when do you let them watch this? When do you do that? They're great on that stuff.

They give great advice. Even on moral questions. Learned a lot from these folks.

Now, I'm not saying that there isn't a lot of wisdom in the covenant that comes from God's law that non-Christians don't know. But what I am saying is when it comes to the core of being a good person, non-Christians do not lack civil morality. As much as we think they do.

Non-Christians can set up just governments. Non-Christians can set up good neighborhoods and so forth. Because they're created in God's image.

They might scratch and scrape and mar and try to disfigure that image. But they can't, ultimately. They might suppress the truth of God in unrighteousness.

But they can't suppress it all at the same time. It's the gospel that's shocking. So when we have those conversations with our friends about how to raise children, we often just do the da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da back and forth.

And we run over each other's sentences and interrupt each other. And then it comes to Jesus dying on a cross for our sins and being raised for our justification. And you can hear a pin drop.

Conversations stop and our friends just... How long are we going to be talking about this? And as we talk about it, they ask a few questions and they sit there. Yeah, I mean, if that were true, it would change everything. See, the gospel's strange.

The other stuff isn't. The gospel is strange. So we have to be driven by the gospel, even though we're directed by the law.

And that's what we find in the passage before us in Romans 4. Before we get there, though, I want to look really briefly, too briefly, at Genesis chapter 15, which is really the lodestar for what Paul is talking about here. Paul is thinking about the whole Abraham narrative, but especially Genesis 15 when he is writing his argument in Romans chapter 4. Abraham has just returned from battling the pagan king, and he is greeted by this strange figure, the king of Salem. Not Oregon.

The king of Salem, and Salem here, shalom, peace, is the beginnings of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, of course, before it is Jerusalem as we know it in the Bible. But he is the strange, enigmatic figure we don't know much about, who was the king of Salem.

And it's clear that he is a very extraordinary figure because Abraham pays him tithes and greets him as Lord, as his suzerain. And Melchizedek, this strange figure, offers Abram bread and wine after this conquest over the pagan kings. And after these things, verse 1, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision.

Fear not, Abram, I am your shield. Your reward shall be very great. But Abram said, O Lord God, what will you give me? For I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eleazar of Damascus.

And Abram said, Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my own house will be my heir. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him. This man shall not be your heir.

Your very own son shall be your heir. And he brought him outside and said, Look toward heaven and number the stars if you are able to number them. Then he said to him, So shall your offspring be.

And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness. And he said to him, I am the Lord who brought you out from the land of Ur, of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess. But he said, O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it? He said to him, Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtle dove, and a young pigeon.

And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. And when the birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. Then the Lord said to Abram, Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years.

But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace. You shall be buried in a good old age, and they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking firepot and flaming torch passed between those pieces. And we read that on that day God made a covenant with Abram. Abram comes back from this war and he's given good news.

Abram, you belong to me. I am your shield. Your reward shall be very great.

To ancient Near Eastern lawyers, this would be known as a royal grant. It was an outright gift. Sort of the thing that happens when a modern monarch makes someone appear for heroic activity on the battlefield or for great contributions to society.

Make them an earl or a lord of some sort, bringing them not only a new title but also a new estate that can, in some cases at least, be passed down to future generations. Well, the only problem with this, Abram says, is this is a good news, bad news day for me. The good news is you are my shield and my reward shall be very great.

The bad news is I don't have an heir. What good is an inheritance without an heir? You know, the heir part of inheritance. This story is going to stop with me.

As it is right now, I don't know if you've seen the situation down here, but it doesn't look good. Eliezer of Damascus is the only one. Because you haven't given me an heir.

Blaming God here. Because you haven't given me an heir, how am I to take this promise seriously? Seems like the empirical facts of the case. Everything that Abraham sees counts against the promise.

And yet God counters again with a promise, offering the innumerable stars as testimonies. You can count them. So numerous shall your heirs be.

How can this possibly be? I'm only asking for one. And yet Abram believed. Abram believed the Lord and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Hashav, the word here that is employed, is an unmistakably legal term. He declared him righteous then and there. What's remarkable is that the story doesn't end there.

And then they lived happily ever after and Abram was a good man who always did the right thing and did what Jesus would do. But sadly, tragically, the story goes through a twist and turns after this. We're not even finished yet with Abram's unbelief in this very episode.

But you know what he's going to do later. He's going to try to make the promise come about by his own effort, planning and scheming by having a child through Hagar instead of Sarah, though the promise was that Sarah will be the bearer of this child of promise. And then as they're sojourning in a foreign land, this pagan king wants to take Sarah for his wife and Abram's a little worried about his own state of affairs at this point.

He's afraid for his own life. And so he says, she's my sister. And so he thinks that she's available.

This is not the sort of thing that you go to counseling for these things for many, many, many years. And this is Abram, our forefather in faith. You see, faith doesn't create, faith receives.

And God had to keep preaching the gospel to Abraham before he would believe it. And then you thought, you think he's got, I got it, I got it, I got it, I don't got it. It's sort of that thing where you think he has it and

then he drops the ball.

But he hasn't dropped it completely. God is always there preaching. And you think at some point God would say, OK, you know, Abram, you and Sarah give me nothing but headaches.

I'm not going to let the same dog bite me twice. I'm moving on to someone else. There's surely got to be somebody around here who's going to be more amenable.

Someone is going to work with me here. But he doesn't move on because he has made this absolute unconditional pledge and he will keep it. And so he keeps preaching that pledge to Abram.

And this is the doctrine of justification that is so paradoxical for us. It's so difficult, isn't it? Very difficult for us to really hold on to this one. That in spite of everything I see about myself and in myself and around myself, God declares those to be just who at the time that he declares it are actually unjust.

That the promise outweighs what we can see or feel. That's why the gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing. It's counterintuitive.

You mentioned this sort of stuff on the street and it's not just very religious people from various denominations who get mad at you. It's non-Christian. That's not fair.

Then why religion doesn't work then? Religion is supposed to sort of be the carrot out there for being a better person. It all seems like pie in the sky for Abram even at this point. Sarah is still barren and she's not getting any younger.

She's 99 years old, he's 100. And yet God gets the ball rolling and keeps the ball rolling by preaching. Just by preaching a gospel that is counterintuitive, that isn't consistent with all of the realities that he sees all around him.

He has to keep preaching it because everything he experiences when God isn't talking seems so palpably to count against it. How will I know that these things will happen? Isn't that amazing? He asks this after he believed and was justified. I believe.

How will I know this will happen? What kind of pledge can you give me? Just reminding us again, as Paul says in 2 Timothy 2.13, if we are faithless, God remains faithful since He cannot deny Himself. When God unilaterally swears something by Himself, it must come to pass. And so he has this very strange vision.

Wow, what a strange vision it was. Take animals, cut them in half and split them on one side of the aisle and the other. And Abram probably knew exactly what this kind of ceremony was because in the ancient Near East when the greater power, the emperor, would cut a covenant, that's why it was called cutting a covenant, would cut a covenant with the lesser tribes in his federation inaugurating the treaty, you would have both sides, you know, like friends of the groom, friends of the bride, you'd have both sides, both peoples represented there as witnesses and the gods called upon as witnesses and the great king would cause the lesser king to pass through the halves of the animals.

And this was a sign and a seal, public ceremony sealing the treaty, saying may the same fate befall me if I do not keep the terms of this treaty. As I walk solemnly between the halves of these severed animals, may I be cut in half by the great king if I am not faithful to all that He commands. This was a suzerainty treaty.

Literally cutting a covenant. And so far it looks pretty familiar. It's a suzerainty treaty.

It's an international device to seal an international treaty so that now this lesser kingdom is part of the empire. What's strange is that as Abram falls asleep he has a vision with a smoking fire pot passing through these severed halves. Now first of all it's important to point out that really, and I'm not trying to be clever here, it really can be documented as you go through these narratives of the patriarchs that the greatest leaps forward in redemptive history occur when they're asleep.

It's when they're active that you'll look at your watch and say, wow there's a lot of chapters on that. Then somebody goes to sleep, you know Jacob in Genesis falls asleep in the ladder from heaven to earth. Otherwise it's just a lot about him running from his big brother who's after him.

And he falls asleep and wow your tears are running down your eyes because God's the only actor in the scene. That's what's happening here. God is the only actor.

Abram has fallen asleep. He has finally shut Abram up and he is a passive receiver of the gospel. He has just preached the gospel and now he's sealing it, ratifying it publicly with this ceremony.

May the blood be on my head, God says. May I be split in two, torn down the middle if this promise isn't fulfilled. I'm not sending you down the aisle.

I'm walking down the aisle alone. The emperor taking the place of the vassal. Walking down that aisle by himself while assuming the curses upon his own head for this treaty to be realized.

In Genesis 22, when Abram follows God's command to sacrifice Isaac, God provides a substitute. At just the right moment, just as Abram is about to plunge his knife into his son Isaac, circumcision was a partial cutting off of the flesh precisely to keep that from happening. A total cutting off.

Either a partial cutting off in circumcision or a total cutting off, the knife being plunged into the heart and every man and woman and child will stand trial in his own works and bear the curse upon his own head. Circumcision was a way of cutting off, of including the people in the covenant, which is why when Moses, probably because of Zipporah, his wife came from a pagan background, didn't want their son circumcised. God came to kill Moses as he was walking along the way.

He came to kill him for not carrying that out. And so finally, Zipporah went and took a knife and she did it and then she threw the foreskin at Moses' feet. You have a bloody God and a bloody religion and God relented.

Why? Because Moses' son was now identified with him. There's the foreskin at Moses' feet, bloody. And all of this typology is to say, don't, don't, don't do this by yourself.

Do not appear in that holy courtroom in your own righteousness. Identify with the only one who fulfilled all righteousness. And that's why Paul so sharply contrasts the covenant that was made at Mount Sinai where the people said, all this we will do.

And then we read, in accordance with these words, all this we will do. He splashed the blood on the people. You assume responsibility for this.

You said the oath. You made the promise. All this we will do.

And he sprinkled the blood upon the people. And so that national covenant, this isn't about salvation, it's about the national covenant. Israel as the theocracy that is a type and shadow of the heavenly kingdom to

come.

Their being, that theocracy, their remaining in that earthly land is conditioned on their obedience. Very different from the promise that God gave to Adam and Eve after the fall. I will, I will, I will, I will.

I will send a Redeemer. Very different from the promise that He made to Abraham. I will, I will, I will, I will.

Sealing it with Him walking alone through the severed house. Very different from the covenant that He made with David. Even though I know your sons will turn out to be as big a scoundrel as you were, I will not ever withhold my favor for the sake of the promise I swore to you this day.

And it's not like the covenant that the prophets prophesied, for instance, in Jeremiah 31 when the prophet says, God says through Jeremiah, Behold, the days are coming when I will make a new covenant and it will not be like the covenant that I made with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai, which they broke, though I was a husband to them. In fact, Mosiah 6-7 says, Like Adam, Israel broke my covenant. This is the tragedy that Paul is exploring in Romans and elsewhere that Israel is in Adam too.

It's not like you have bad Gentile in Adam, Jews in Moses. No, you have Israel too, it turns out, in Adam. The only way we can all get out of this together is by being transferred to the domain of Christ.

And Paul would later attest in Galatians 3, 19 and 20 that this Abrahamic covenant couldn't possibly be more firmly established because it was based on God's sworn oath rather than the people's. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made, Paul says here in Galatians 3. He does not say and to seeds as of many, but as of one. And to your seed who is Christ.

And this I say that the law which was 430 years later cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ. The Abrahamic covenant was confirmed in Christ by Christ Himself being the fulfillment of that vision. Jesus Christ Himself bore the curses of the law, fulfilling the law and then bearing our curses the curtain was torn into.

He did bear the curses for our sin bearing. And then in chapter 4, Paul uses the allegory of two mountains and two mothers and tells the earthly Jerusalem that they actually are spiritually descended from Hagar. Imagine people scratching their heads.

OK Paul, I know you say in Galatians 4, but we all have bad days. You misunderstood the story. You meant to say children of Sarah.

No, actually I didn't. Yeah, I think you did because the Arabs are the children of Hagar. No, I meant to say what I said.

They're spiritual children of Hagar. All of those who believe in Jesus Christ whether Jew or Gentile are children of Abraham. Mind-blowing! The story just keeps, the plot thickens.

God's promise creates a new world out of void. Fertile pastures out of barrenness. Acquittal out of condemnation.

That's what God's words do. God declares things and they are so. And that's what these passages in Romans chapter 4 tell us.

There was a doctrine in rabbinical teaching called the Merit of the Fathers where it was believed that how do you reconcile the fact that you have in the prophets all of this horrible judgment that comes upon the people of God for their sin? You can't just rip all of that out of there. If you're a Jew, a believing Jew, faithful Jew, you have to take those passages. Well, what do you do with that? What do you do with Israel's horrible violation of the law? Can Israel be saved? And the answer came back from the rabbis, yes, because whenever the Israelites have a deficit in their bank account, the merit of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is transferred as if they themselves have done it.

The doctrine of justification was taught clearly by the rabbis. It was even justification by an imputed righteousness, but it was the imputed righteousness of Abraham. He was such a good person.

The good things that he did were over and beyond the call of duty, and those merits can be transferred to us. And Paul is saying it's just the opposite. Did you read this story? Let's go back and read the story about Abraham.

What did he have to boast about? Maybe before others who thought he was a good person, but not before God. God knew what he was really like. He didn't have enough righteousness for himself, much less something to give to Sarah or anybody else.

But what does it say? He believed God and was right then and there justified. Abraham is an example for us of the fact that God justifies the wicked. And so Paul here sharply contrasts the logic of the law with the logic of the promise.

Not because he's against the law, but because when it comes to this question of inheriting the promise, it can never come by our works. It can never come by our scheming. It only comes by way of promise.

In verse 13, Paul says we know the difference between a contract and a bequest. We know the difference between employees and heirs. And this is not that kind of treaty where the people say all this we will do and then God rewards them for their obedience.

This is a bequest. This is an inheritance. You know the difference between if you do this, I'll do that.

Let's sign this. Get it notarized. The contract.

Contract for hire. What slaves do or employees do, not what sons and heirs do. And yet Paul says the one who does not work, but trusts him who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited for righteousness.

Brothers and sisters, we don't have a contract with God. Paul, he says that he would save me if I would do this. It's not a lot, but he said I have to at least mean I have to try.

I have to do my best. I have to really mean it. I have to all this.

It's not a contract. It's an inheritance. Sit down.

Stop making promises. First I want you to sit there and listen. Just hear as I read to you the inheritance you've just received.

As the writer of the Hebrews says, once the testator dies, the will goes into effect. And that's what happened to the cross. Once Jesus was crucified and bore our curses, our judgment on the cross, it's not just that we were forgiven, but the will went into effect.

And we get to hear that will read every Lord's day. All of the riches that can't be enumerated in our lifetime, all of the riches that we have in Jesus Christ simply bestowed on us through faith. The contrast is either or again in verse 14, for if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect because he says the law brings about wrath for where there is no law, there is no transgression.

You see here, the law and the gospel not only function as describing what God requires and describing what God does to save us, the law and the gospel do these things. The law brings about wrath. It's the law that brings us under the fiery judgment of God, and it is the gospel that not just telling about what Jesus did, the gospel actually brings us under the saving mercy of God.

I love the question and answer 64 of the Heidelberg Catechism. Where does the saving faith come from? The Holy Spirit creates it in our hearts by the preaching of the Holy Gospel and confirms it by the use of the Holy Sacrament. The Holy Spirit does this through means as he did with Abram.

God's word is effectual. It does what it says. Gospel doesn't just speak about a world that might come into existence if Abram will follow all the instructions.

It creates the world that didn't exist first and then calls Abram to obey, and that's why he uses the analogy of ex nihilo creation itself. He says this is like another ex nihilo creation. What did God have to work with? Did God say, OK, there's red.

There's my red over there. There's my clay over here. I'm going to paint.

I'm going to make. No, he had nothing to work with. He said, let there be light.

And there was light. And Paul says that's what happens in your salvation. What did God have to work with? Someone asked Martin Luther, are you saying that we don't have anything to contribute to salvation at all? And he said, oh, I'm sorry if you got that impression.

No, we have lots to contribute to our own salvation. Sin and resistance. Why do we contribute to the creation of the world? Absolutely nothing.

Well, we contribute that much to our salvation. While we were dead, he made us alive. While we were enemies, he reconciled us by the blood of Christ.

It's always while we were not only passive, while we were active in hating him, he was active in loving and reconciling us to himself. For this reason, Paul says, it all depends on faith in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all of his descendants. See, Paul's logic here is the logic of the Protestant Reformation.

Or the Protestant Reformation, the logic of Paul. You have all the solos here. He'll even throw in Soli Deo Gloria in a moment.

Here's the logic of it. It's faith alone, not because faith itself is a work, but because faith is simply receiving the work of Christ so that it can be by grace alone and can come to all of his descendants, both Jew and Gentile. And he adds, as it is written, I've made you the father of many nations in the presence of God, in whom he believed to give life to the dead and called into existence the things that do not exist.

It's not by doing what Jesus did. It's by hearing what Jesus did that we are brought into this strange new world. And we are made new creatures with new characters in a new story, a new script that we didn't

write.

We're no longer the stars of this show about nothing. We are instead supporting characters in the greatest story ever told. The future now was God's future, not Abram's.

The scheming, conniving, plotting Abram was now Abraham, the father of many nations. And by Genesis 22, he was willing even to drive the night into Isaac because he was convinced, convinced that if God asked him to do that, he had the power to raise him up from the dead. He had faith in the God of crucifixion and resurrection.

Paul adds here one more glistening pearl to the chain of the promise logic. He says if the inheritance comes by faith in the promise and not by the works of the law, then faith gives all glory to God. See? Now that's why he's the headliner.

That's why he's the star of this story. All glory goes to God. Nothing is left for us to claim ourselves.

That's why we have to be promise-driven because we're fallen sinners. Not just purpose-driven. We can't be purpose-driven.

Purposes will destroy us unless the promise is driving us. No matter what we do, no matter how we fail to fulfill our purposes in life, it's always God's constant preaching of that promise. That's why we have to hear the gospel every week.

Not once to get saved and then we move on. We need to hear it all the time because that's the thing that remains counterintuitive to us the rest of our lives. If you went pre-Sunday without hearing the gospel, you would start falling back into your natural religion, which is self-trust.

I'm not a sailor or the son of a sailor, so if you have a boat in the harbor over here, just ignore the errors in the story. It's my story so I can do what I want with it. It's an analogy.

Think of a sailboat and I'll end with this. Think of a sailboat that is equipped with all the latest gadgets and you come sailing out of the harbor. You know where you're going because you plotted your course.

You have all of the equipment that's helping you guide the boat and you get out there in the middle of the seas and your radio tells you and all of your other equipment tells you that a squall is coming up and you are in trouble. You don't have a motor. It's a beautiful day but it's dead calm.

There's no wind in the sails at all and you're just sitting there. Well, you could shine, polish your equipment. You could get more information about how you would get to safety if you could.

You could get more direction but eventually you'll exhaust yourself and realize that's not doing one bit of good because you don't have any wind to power this boat anywhere. And a lot of Christians become Christians and they're like that boat sailing out of the harbor. The wind in their sails has been forgiven.

And those who've been forgiven much love much. They're just out looking. What can I do? And then in the process because of who we are, they start trusting in that.

And they say, wow, I'm really changed. I'm really changing. And they start looking at themselves again.

And then they start realizing if they're halfway honest that they're also living in Romans 7. Good that I want to do. I don't do. Evil that I don't want to do.

That I keep on doing. Wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body of death? And then after he asks that he looks outside of himself and says thanks be to God for Jesus Christ our Lord.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And he gets moving again. He gets sailing again.

No purposes. No plans. No agendas.

No programs. No recommitments. No rededications.

We'll be able to move you one inch out of the storms of life into the safety of Christ's harbor unless the wind of the gospel is in your sail. The law guides us. The law tells us what our purposes are.

But the gospel drives us all the way to heaven.

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