

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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Would you take God's Word and be finding Romans chapter 4, and as you're finding Romans chapter 4, I want you to imagine something. I want you to imagine two letters that have been placed in the mailbox. One letter is on crisp, embossed stationery, very expensive stationery. It is typed impeccably. It is full of cogent thoughts, not one word is misspelled, not a smudge on that letter, but it has no stamp on it. It's placed in the mailbox. Another letter, written in a pencil, written on inferior paper, with many misspellings, smudged and dirty, is dropped into the same mailbox, but this letter has a stamp on it. Now which letter is going to be delivered? The one that is beautiful with no stamp, or the one, though inferior, has a stamp on it. Well you know the answer.

Now, folks, in the spiritual life, in the Christian life, faith is that stamp. Now some of us may look better than others, but you know what God looks for? God looks for the stamp of faith upon our lives. I want to talk to you about faith, strong faith, and how to have it.

We've been studying about Abraham, and when God called Abraham, God said to Abraham, "Abraham, through you, all the nations of the world are going to be blessed." Now God did not want to make the Jewish nation simply a reservoir of blessing; He wanted to make them a channel of blessing; that through them all the nations of the world would be blessed. And God did not bring you here today to make you simply a reservoir of blessing, to have you sit, soak, and sour, but to make you a channel of blessing. And the same way that God made Abraham a blessing, God will make you a blessing and God made Abraham a blessing by faith. And the Scripture that we're going to study today talks about Abraham's faith, and the Bible tells us that it was strong faith. Would you like to be strong in faith, would you?

Well, let's read here in God's Word, beginning in verse 16, Romans 4 verse 16 through verse 25. The Bible now is talking about our relationship to God, and it says, "*Therefore, it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end, that the promise might be sure to all the seed,*" that is, to all of Abraham's descendants, "*not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham who is the father of us all, Jew and Gentile.*" Now, we can all call him, "Father Abraham." "*As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, before Him whom he believed,*" Abraham believed God, that's what that means, "*Even God, who quickeneth the dead,*" the word quickeneth means He brings the dead to life, "*and calleth those things which be not as though they were,*" that is, He brings something out of nothing. And then it speaks again of Abraham, "*Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed,*" or thy descendants, "*be.*" And now watch this, verse 19, "*And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither the deadness of Sarah's womb.*" Oh I love this verse, watch it, "*He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was,*" here's our key, are you reading? "*But was strong in faith, giving glory to God and being fully persuaded that what He,*" that is, God, "*had promised, He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*" Now watch this, this is not just ancient history. Look now in

verse 23, “Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him.” In other words, God did not have a message for Abraham only and not for us, “but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed. If we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.” It's clear, folks, what happened to Abraham so long ago is an example and a lesson to us.

Now why is faith so important? Friend, you can't please God without faith. The Bible says, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him.” And if you please God, it doesn't matter whom you displease. And if you displease God, it really doesn't matter whom you please. And the way to please God is to believe God, Hebrews 11 and verse 6. Folks, you can't be saved apart from faith, “For by grace are ye saved through faith, therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” and anybody in this building today who is lost can be saved if they will put their faith where God put their sins, upon the Lord Jesus Christ. We're saved by faith. It's faith, friend, that enables us to live the Christian life. Some folks here are stumbling and failing, other folks are victorious. What is the difference? It's the difference in those two letters I told you about. By faith, the Bible says, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” Some are overcomers and some are overcome. What is the difference? The difference is faith. Some folks have a bright hope for Heaven. To some people Heaven is very real. To others it's not real. But for those who have faith, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Heaven is just as real to some folks as if they were already there. What makes the difference? Faith makes the difference.

Now what is faith? Listen carefully, listen carefully. What is faith? Faith is not a hunch, faith is not positive thinking, faith is not believing everything will work out. Faith is taking God at His word. Are you listening? Did you hear that? Faith is taking God at His word. Faith is not responding to emotions, feelings, icicles up and down your spine, miracles and signs. Faith is not believing simply that God can, faith is knowing that God will. Real faith, strong faith is death to doubt. It is dumb to discouragement. It is blind to impossibilities. It knows that God will. Now this is the kind of faith we need, and we're going to learn the kind of faith that Abraham had and then we're going to learn that what Abraham experienced, we can experience. Now, folks, if we believe as Abraham believed, we will achieve as Abraham achieved. That's what this passage is all about. We're studying, and what an encouragement this ought to be to us.

You say, “Adrian, the illustration that you used about the smudged letter was that a good illustration, because are you encouraging us to have a smudged life?” No, no. Well let me tell you something wonderful. Abraham smudged the letter, if you'll read the Old Testament. I mean, he did some dumb, bonehead things. Abraham made some industrial strength mistakes, he really did. You study the life of Abraham, he wasn't perfect by any stretch of the imagination. But did you know, in the New Testament, you can't read one word about all of his mistakes, not one. Do you know

what God remembered Abraham for? Not his failure but his faith. Isn't that great, isn't that great? It's the stamp of faith that God is looking for.

Now the Bible says that, "*Abraham was strong in faith.*" Would you like to be strong in faith, would you? Let me mention about five things that are true about Abraham's faith that I want to be true about your faith. First of all, write down the word gift, G-I-F-T. See, **strong faith is received as a gift of God**; strong faith is a gift of God. Now look if you will again in verse 16, Romans chapter 4 and verse 16. You're going to see here, "*Therefore, it is of faith that it might be by grace.*" Now, what is grace? Well grace is God taking the initiative. Grace is the unmerited favor of God given to sinners such as we, where there is no merit whatsoever. Now, folks, salvation is the grace gift of God, but so is the faith that we have to receive that salvation. Now grace is not the reward for our faith, it is grace that takes the initiative to give us that faith. You don't generate faith, you are totally depraved, by nature. There's nothing in you that could generate faith. As a matter of fact, the Bible says in Ephesians 2 verse 1, "*And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.*" It's not just that you're sick, folks, without Jesus you are dead, you're dead. So learn this, now, grace is not a reward for our faith. Our faith is the gift of God's grace. It's an amazing thing. You see, God must give us faith. Well does He give us faith? Indeed He does. Well does He give faith to some people? Put down Romans 12 verse 3, we'll get to it later, but it says that, "*God hath dealt to every man a measure of faith.*" "*God hath dealt to every man a measure of faith.*" The only reason that we could have faith is that God takes the initiative and God puts that faith in our own hearts.

Now, faith is a gift of God, faith receives the gift of God. Now listen very carefully. Does that mean, therefore, that God is going to believe for you? No, He will not. You must do your own believing. Well you say, "Adrian, I thought faith was a gift of God." Indeed it is. Apart from God you could not believe. Let me ask you a question. Is breathing a gift of God? It really is. God gives you lungs and God gives you air but you can smother if you want. God gives you lungs, you couldn't breathe without lungs. God gives you air, you couldn't breathe without air. But friend, you can smother if you wish, and you can fail to believe God. Now faith is the gift of Almighty God, and thank God for that. Now what does that mean? That means that not a mother's child in this building can say, "Well, I just can't believe, it's not my fault." Yes you can, yes you can. If you wish to believe, you can, but you can smother the truth and smother yourself if you wish, but God will enable you to believe. But when you do believe, no bragging, no boasting. To God be the glory, even for that faith which is the gift of God.

You see, remember what I said, that faith is simply taking God at His word? Now you've got to find a word from God. Look in Romans 4 verse 13, look, "*For the promise,*" see the word promise, underscore it. Look in the end of Romans 4 verse 14, "*That the promise might be made of none effect,*" underscore the word promise. Look in Romans 4 verse 16, "*Therefore, it is of faith, that it might be by grace to the end, that the promise might be sure.*" The promise, the promise, the promise. Faith is your response to the promises of God, to the Word of God. And that's the reason the Bible

says in Romans chapter 10 verse 17, “*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by,*” what, “*Word of God, Word of God.*” You’ll never have faith if you don’t get a Word from God. You’ve got to get a promise from God in order to have faith. And friend the Bible is chocked full of them, the Bible is chocked full of promises. And, you see, God gives you the lungs, that’s the promise, and God gives you the air, but you’ve got to believe, you’ve got to receive, it’s a gift of God.

Now we’re all familiar with Billy Graham. But unless you know something about church history, you might not know Dwight L. Moody. But Dwight L. Moody was the Billy Graham of his day, many years ago. And Dwight L. Moody said something about faith, and I want you to listen very carefully because it’s important. He said, “I used to close my Bible and pray for faith, ‘God give me faith, God give me faith, God give me faith, please.’” And he said, “Faith never would grow.” And then he said, “I read in the Bible in Romans chapter 10 verse 17, ‘*Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*’” And he said, “I stopped praying for faith and started reading my Bible and faith just burst aflame in my heart.” You see, faith is a gift of God, you’ve got to get into the Word of God. And by the way, in soul winning, when we bring people to faith in Jesus Christ, if you want them to believe, you’ve got to get them something to believe. Give them the Word of God, the promise, the promise, the promise. So first point, strong faith, strong faith receives the gift of God, have you got that?

Second thing; **strong faith releases the grace of God.** It receives the gift of God and then it releases the grace of God. Look in Romans 4 verse 16 again, “*Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace to the end that the promise might be sure.*” You see, faith links us to grace. We’re not saved by faith, we’re saved by grace, but it is faith that links us to grace. The only way that grace can ever operate is through faith. Now Jesus died on the cross, He paid for your sins, but that does you absolutely no good until you put your faith, as I’ve said, where God put your sins, upon the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, grace is released by faith; unbelief holds grace a prisoner.

Matthew chapter 13 verse 58, it speaks of the Lord Jesus and His hometown of Nazareth, and it says, “*He could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief, because of their unbelief.*” They had fettered the grace of God in their own lives. You see, the only way that the promise can be sure is if it’s by grace. Look in the, in verse 16 again, “*Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace to the end that the promise might be sure.*” You say, “Adrian, are you sure that you’re saved?” Yes! “How can you be sure, you’ve got a lot of confidence in yourself, don’t you?” I don’t have any confidence in myself. You see, if I had any confidence in myself, I could never be sure, I don’t know if I’m good enough or not. But, if it is by grace, then I can be sure. That’s what it says right here.

Suppose everybody said, “Everybody wants to be saved, run around the block. Some can’t run. Everybody wants to be saved, read a chapter of the Bible. Some can’t read. Everybody wants to be saved, give a hundred dollars. Some don’t have a hundred dollars. But there’s one thing that can make the promise sure, and that is grace, grace. You see, faith receives the gift of God, faith releases the grace of God.

You know, if you think that you're going to get to Heaven by your good works, I'll guarantee you you'll never be sure. You'll always be wondering, "Have I done enough?" You'll not have a know-so salvation; you'll have a hope-so salvation. Rather than being an exclamation point, you'll be a question mark. Until you understand it's by grace, and then you say, "Praise God, Hallelujah. I know that I'm saved."

I heard about a group of people who were queuing up to get into Heaven and they were checking them into the pearly gates. And there was a long, long line. People standing at the end of the line heard some jubilation there at the front of the line, they were leaping and dancing and cheering. And they said, "Go down there," to a friend. Said, "Run down there way to the front of the line and find out what all of the good news is." He came back, he said, "It is wonderful news!" He said, "Well, what is it?" He said, "They're not counting prayer meeting attendance." Now listen, folks, you ought to come to prayer meeting, but you don't get saved by coming to prayer meeting or by Sunday School or by giving your tithe or whatever it is. You'll never have the assurance of your salvation if you do that. But to say, "Thank God, I know that I know I'm saved," it is by grace that it might be sure.

So, what does grace do? It receives the gift of God. I mean, what does faith do, strong faith, it receives the gift of God. What does strong faith do, it releases the grace of God. Third thing, I hope you're getting this, **strong faith respects the greatness of God**. Now here's the key to his strong faith. He had respect to the greatness of God. Begin reading in Romans 4 verse 17, "*As it is written, 'I have made thee a father of many nations,' before Whom he believed,*" the whom refers to God, he refers to Abraham, "*even God,*" now watch this, "*who quickeneth the dead,*" that means He gives life to the dead, "*and calleth those things which be as nought as though they were.*" Now what's he saying about this? He's saying, "Our God specializes in two things." You want, matter of fact He's cornered the market in these two things. You want me to tell you two things that nobody else can do that only God can do, of course there're many, but these are the two that he mentions right here. Number one, God raises the dead. Number two, He makes something out of nothing. Now He's cornered the market there, hasn't He? Now this is what Abraham believes. Look at it. It says here in Romans 4:17, "*He believed even God, who quick, quickeneth the dead and calleth those things which be nought as thou they were.*" He is saying, "God, this is Your specialty. I know what you can do. You're the one, Almighty God, who brings life out of death and something out of nothing."

Well why was this very important? Well you'll have to remember now that Abraham was a hundred years old when God spoke to him and his wife was ninety years old and they were both past the age of procreation, that is, having children. Look if you will here in Romans 4 verse 19, "*And being not weak in faith he considered not his own body now dead when he was about a hundred years old, neither the deadness of Sarah's womb.*" Now what he's talking about is, that Abraham, a hundred years old, he's impotent, and Sarah's been through the menopause, there's no way they can have a baby. But he says, "Now wait a minute, God, wait a minute, God,

you're a God who brings life out of death. You're a God that brings something out of nothing." And what strong faith does, it doesn't look at the problem, it looks to God, Almighty God. So Abraham, coming out of the maternity ward on a cane saying, "It's a boy!" Can you imagine, can you imagine? How do you explain that? A miracle of God. Now the Bible says that, "*Abraham had respect to the greatness of God.*"

Do you know that people with weak faith just have a small God? Listen, if your faith is weak, you need to get to know God. The Bible says in Psalm 9:10, "*They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.*" Glance at your problem, gaze at your God. Notice here in Romans 4 verse 18, look at it, speaks of Abraham. Now watch this, "*Who against hope believed in hope.*" Now look up here and let me ask you a question; do you think you're hopeless, do you? Do you think there's no hope for you? Do you think God is finished with you or never got started with you? Listen to me. Do you think that other people can know God but not you? Friend, let me tell you, God sent me here to tell you that God has hope for you. Now you listen to me. "*Who,*" watch it, look at now in Romans 4 verse 18, "*Who against hope,*" that is, human hope, "*believed in hope.*" That is, there is human hope; impossible. There is heavenly hope; "*With God all things are possible.*" Now the difference is that Abraham now looked at God, God who can bring life out of death and make something out of nothing, and Abraham said, "I am going to believe in that God!" Now don't you look at yourself, don't you look at your problems, don't you dare say that you're hopeless, you are not, you are not! God can bring life to you and God'll make something out of you. And by the way, the only thing that God makes something out of is nothing, and so if you'll become nothing he'll make something out of you. When you stop trying and let God.

You see, Abraham was faced with two impossibilities. First impossibility, that he could have a child; impossible. Second impossibility, that God can tell a lie. So he just says, "I'll forget that impossibility and I'll take this one." And that impossibility became a possibility because God did exactly what he said he would do because God cannot lie and Abraham had a promise from God.

Now, are you following? Strong faith receives the gift of God, God enables you to believe. Strong faith releases the grace of God, so you can be sure. Strong faith respects the character of God! God is God, and when you see that God is God, then you're going to have strong faith. Faith, mighty faith, the promise, sees, looks to God alone, laughs at impossibilities and says, "It shall be done."

Now, the next thing. **Strong faith**, watch this now, **regards the guidance of God**, strong faith regards the guidance of God. Look in Romans 4 verses 20 and 21, "*He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God and being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform.*" Now, who did the miracle, who caused Isaac to be born, the son of promise, who caused it? Well, the Bible says what God promises God performed it. Well I want to ask you a question; do you think that Abraham and Sarah slept together? Of course they did. Now I don't mean to be crude or vulgar, but God did it, but God did it through Abraham and Sarah. Are you listening? Listen, now let me tell you something.

Real faith responds to the guidance of God. And real faith doesn't just sit back and say, "Well, now God, You said You're going to give us a son, and that's all there is to it." No, Abraham and Sarah certainly did their part, and you see, there was the obedience of faith.

Put this verse down in your margin, Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 8, when it speaks of Abraham and his faith. And it says, "*By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive as an inheritance, obeyed.*" Now the point I'm trying to get out of that is by faith he obeyed. Faith is more of a verb than a noun. You know the difference between belief and faith? Faith is belief with legs on it. Strong faith not only believes that God can but it believes that God will and God will do it by me.

Now, we cannot be in this passage without going to James chapter 2, put it in your margin, James 2 verses 21 through 23. Now remember that the Bible says that, "Abraham was justified by grace, by faith." But now notice what old James said. He says, "*Was Abraham our father not justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?*" Now remember this was after he'd already been justified by faith, now it says he's justified by works. "*Saying, 'Seest thou how faith was wrought with his works and by works was faith made perfect.' And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness and he is called the friend of God.*" What does all of that mean? Are James and Paul in contradiction? No. You have to understand it. You see, Paul is talking about being justified before God. James is talking about being justified before men, not that men justify us, but that men can see. James says, "Listen, you show me your faith without your works, I will show you my faith by my works."

Now listen very carefully. You are not saved by faith and works, but you are saved by faith that works. Did you hear that? You are not saved by faith and works, you are saved by faith that works! You are justified by faith alone, but the faith that justifies is never alone; it always has works. If your religion hasn't changed your life, you'd better change your religion. I mean, "*If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature,*" Second Corinthians 5 verse 17, and when God does something in your heart and in your life, it will be seen. That's the reason I'm going to, in a moment, give you an invitation to confess your faith in Jesus Christ. Now you just sit there and you say, "Well I'm trusting Him but I'm not going to make it be known. I'm not going to take any stand." Then you're not really trusting Him. The Bible says in Romans 10:11, "*When we believe on Him we'll not be ashamed of Him.*" Faith without works is dead. Walking down an aisle won't save anybody, but what it indicates will save everybody. If you love Him enough that you're not ashamed of Him to make it public, openly glorify the Lord Jesus. The Bible, in Luke 9 verse 26, Jesus said, "*If you're ashamed of Me and of My Word before this sinful and adulterous generation, I'll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father.*" It's very clear, folks, that Abraham and Sarah did something because of their faith. You see, faith responds to the guidance of God. Faith is acting upon what we know to be true. We faithfully obey. And I'm going to

tell you something. If you have Paul's faith, you'll have James' works; they just simply go together.

Now here's the last thing, and I must close. Here's the last thing; **faith reflects the glory of God**. Look in Romans 4 verse 20 again, "*He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith,*" now watch this, "*giving glory to God.*" Would you like to give glory to God? Do you think your unbelief glorifies God? No! Faith reflects the glory of God. Do you know the greatest thing that you could do to give God glory, not give a million dollars, not give your body to be burned, not go overseas as a missionary. The greatest thing that you could do to glorify God is to believe God. He, "*Was strong in faith, giving glory to God.*" Faith says, "God, you're trustworthy." First John 5:10, "*He that believeth not God hath made him a liar.*" Don't prate about your belief in a great God, a good God, a strong God, and all the rest of that and then fail to believe Him. Believe God! Strong faith glorifies God.

And then the last two verses says this, that wasn't just written for Abraham, it was written for us. Abraham believed that God could bring death out of life and make something out of nothing. Do you believe, listen, do you believe that God raised Jesus from the dead? Do you believe He can make something out of you? Then you can be saved, that's it. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. You'll be saved. I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, He'll save you. And it's by grace so you can be sure. Folks, isn't that good? Ain't God good? Amen.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now if you're not saved, you can be saved today. And remember, even the faith is a gift of God. Faith is not an emotion, it's taking God at His word, and God will enable you to do that. Why don't you pray this way? "Dear God," just pray it, "Dear God, I'm a sinner. My sin deserves judgment, but I want mercy. I am spiritually dead and I need life. Jesus, thank You for paying for my sin on the cross. Thank You, Jesus, for dying for me. Thank You for paying my sin debt with Your precious blood. Oh, thank You, Jesus. And now by faith I trust You, Jesus. Come into my life, forgive my sin, cleanse me, save me, save me, Jesus. Lord, give me the courage now to make this public, not to be ashamed of You. And by Your grace and for Your glory I'll live for You the rest of my life if You'll only help me, and I know You will. In Your name I pray, Amen.