

My name's Nick, I have the privilege of serving on staff here as one of our pastors and I just want to say thanks for being a part of our church family. Actually one of the things we get to talk about today is part of our church family is we actually get to recognize new members this morning. So you're going to see quite a few slides going through, we actually had a fairly large class at our last new members gathering. And this is something that we just love to do, we love to invite people to journey with us. To be a part of our mission and vision here at Hershey Free. And these people said, hey, I have heard what Hershey Free's about. I've heard about living with Jesus, loving like Jesus, leading others to do the same and I want to be a part of that. So these new members, they've made the decision to say, hey, Hershey Free, this is my home. Hershey Free, I believe in their mission, in their vision, and I want to be a part of what they're doing. So you might see some people you know on here. I was told not to embarrass anybody this morning, which is pretty typical when the youth guy gets up to speak. They're like don't do anything embarrassing. So they said don't make them stand up, don't make them raise their hand. The one thing that I would love to do is, would you just help me in welcoming our new members this morning? Thank you. We're just honored that you have chosen to journey with us. So I will say this, I don't know if this is embarrassing or not, but if you see them, if you saw somebody on there that you know, make sure just to say hi to them today. Just continue to welcome them into our church family and let them know that they're loved, valued, and appreciated, and we're so thankful for them.

This morning I have the privilege of kicking off our new series on the life of Abraham, and I'm really excited about this. Abraham is one of the most well-known figures in the Bible, actually in multiple other religions as well, which we'll talk about a little bit this morning. But what we're going to do this morning as we begin this study in the life of Abraham, we're actually going to be talking about his faith. And to do that, we're actually going to be predominantly in the New Testament this morning. Over the next few weeks, though, we're going to take time to actually journey through this guy's life. And if you haven't done a study on Abraham before, let me tell you something about Abraham. He's got really extreme highs and really extreme lows. And as we journey through his life, we're going to kind of see this journey of faith that he is on. We're going to see him kind of ebb and flow in how he follows God, how he trusts God, and how he believes in God. And we're going to see him at some really, really pivotal moments in his life. And so today, to kind of kick off the series, we're going to say, hey, let's look at who he is and begin by understanding what this journey of faith looks like for him.

So I don't know how often you've thought about that word faith, though. Have you ever thought about words that we use in Christianity that we just assume everybody knows? We use words all the time. I call it Christian-ese. You can call whatever you want. But the reality is there are words that we use all the time. The word faith. It comes up actually a lot in the Bible. In fact, in Ephesians, chapter two, it's one of the most well-known Bible verses outside of John 3:16. It says this, for by grace, you have been saved through faith. It's not of yourselves. It's a gift of God, not by works that no one can boast.

Over the past few weeks as I've been studying for this sermon and just kind of digging into this concept of faith, the crazy thing is, in the new international version, the version that we use

when we teach and when we lead from the Bible and everything, the word faith in different variations is actually listed over 400 times. However, a fun little tidbit of knowledge, it's only actually mentioned twice in the Old Testament, which is really intriguing when you think about it. Now, the concepts, the unpacking, the outworking's of what faith looks like are yes, they are in the Old Testament, for sure. But the reality is this, that faith is something that we see a lot in the Bible. It's something that should impact us, that should give us pause to go, okay, what is this? And I think if we did a really highly formalized poll, if I asked everybody, even those of you at home right now, just to say, hey, on the count of three, I want you to yell out your definition of the word faith, which I won't do because remember, I'm not supposed to embarrass. If we actually did that, I think we get a lot of different definitions. I think some people might go, well, faith, that's the same as trust, right? You're trusting in Jesus, right? Others may say, well, faith is like, what happens after I believe, right? Still others may say faith is this concept that you believe in a higher power, that if you just do the right things because you're supposed to, that's faith and you get into heaven, right? And while there are definitely elements of faith in all of those definitions, what I did is I said, hey, you know what? We should probably come up with a central definition that we can all work outwards from.

And so if you've been with us a while, you know I have this weird affinity to use Google all the time. And I love to Google things. And this time I went to Google and I was like, okay, what is faith? And it was like a dumpster fire. It was so bad. Like, the amount of definitions I got, it was like, do you mean biblical faith? Do you mean faith in this? Do you mean faith in the government? Do you mean faith in the world? I was like, this is not helpful at all. So I was like, okay, clearly Google is having issues. I don't know if it's because Chat GPT came out. I have no idea, right? I don't know if it's become autonomous now, and it just wants to make me feel really, really dumb. I don't know. So I said, okay, I'm going to go back to what I know, and that's books. I love books. I'm an avid reader. I love to read. And so I went back to one of my theological dictionaries, and this is the definition that they actually gave. Faith is a word that refers to both the intellectual belief and relational trust and or commitment. True faith consists of what is believed in the personal commitment to a person who is trustworthy, reliable, and able to save. (i.e. Christ) That's a great definition, but let's be honest, none of us will remember that once we go to the next slide because it's very wordy. It's just a lot. There's stuff in here, and I'm a big supporter of like, hey, when we are getting a definition for a word, we shouldn't have to define the definition because that just makes us do more work, right? That's not helpful. So I said, okay, how can we actually put this in terms that we will remember, that we will understand? That's palatable and this is what I think faith, a definition of faith, should look like. Faith can be defined as the belief and trust in Christ alone because of who he is, what he has done, and what he will do in and through us.

You see, faith is this multifaceted concept that is unique to Christianity. It's this understanding that we both believe in God, but we also trust God to do immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine because of who he is, what he has done, and what he will do. It's this broad approach to understanding our relationship with a good and perfect God. It's realizing that we can't do anything of our own accord. And so we have faith that God is who he says he is, that he

will come and save, has come and saved us, and will offer us new life. And faith allows for us not just to believe that, but to trust him because we've seen the outworking's of who he is.

Now, you might be sitting here going, that's great, Nick, but it sounds like you just outlined your thesis to a theological position to paper. And in some ways yeah, but at the same time, in order to understand Abraham, we have to understand faith. Because this morning what we are going to do is we are actually going to jump into the book of Romans, which if you've never read the book of Romans before, let me just encourage you. It's a lot. Romans is one of the deepest books in all of Scripture. The theological concepts that are within that book are vast. In fact, in undergrad, I actually said, hey, you know what? I want to take a class, (almost fell, that would have been bad) a class on the book of Romans. Okay? Now, here's the thing. When you're an undergrad, you're usually not the brightest person in the world, right? And I decided I was going to take a night class on the Book of Romans during the winter. And at Moody, where I went to school, night classes were right after dinner time. And if you've ever met a college kid or if you yourself have ever been in college, you know, we love our sleep, right? And you can sleep forever, but especially after you eat, you're just ready to pass out. And so this was a class, it really challenged me, one, to stay awake, but two, to also acknowledge and know more about Romans. And in the course of a semester, we got through six chapters, not because we were dumb kids, well, maybe me, but not because everybody else was dumb, but because it was so theologically deep. And within the context of the book of Romans, that's where we actually enter into this concept of faith, of understanding what faith looks like. And actually, in chapter three, Paul has just finished out this whole treatise on like, hey, as followers of Jesus, it's not our job to boast. We don't boast in what we've done. We don't boast in where we come from. We don't boast in the things that we have. The only thing we can boast in is that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. That's what he's talking about. And then he enters into this conversation about Abraham. And what we need to understand here is Paul is doing this intentionally. You see, most of Paul's readers at this time would have been Jewish believers. Some would have been Greco-Roman believers, but most of them would have been Jewish. And Jewish believers, actually, because they were steeped in Judaism, they had certain beliefs about Abraham.

You see, Abraham is actually a central figure to three different religions. To Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. They all view him differently. But from the Judaic position, certain rabbis would actually teach that Abraham wasn't saved by faith. They would actually teach that Abraham was saved by merit, meaning works, what he had done, who he was. They would say, you know, because of who Abraham was, what he did, that relationship that he had with God that was unlike any other at that period, we as his descendants, we also are saved by merit. And so for a lot of Jewish people, what they would believe is that they didn't have to worry about faith. They were saved by their works. In fact, not even their works. They were saved by Abraham's. And it's interesting because even some of that thought process, I think, sometimes plays into Christendom. Like, I've talked with numerous people and just in getting to know their faith stories, and I'm like, hey, when did you become a follower of Jesus? They're like, well, I was born into a Christian family. Go on. And they're like, no, I've just been raised in the church. And I'm like, cool. Me too. But when did it become personal, right? Or I think at times, and we may not even realize this, but sometimes in our mind, we get this rationalization that if I just do the

right things, right? God has this cosmic checklist or something, which we're trying to meet it. If I just show up to church on time, that's a big one. If I give my tithes, I think it's 10%, right? If I get involved in the group, if I serve, if I don't curse, if I go to work and work well, if I take care of my families, whatever it may be. And we're like, we have this understanding sometimes that we just have to meet this checklist, and that's not it at all. Are we thinking if we're just good enough then we've somehow earned a place in God's kingdom? And I know for many of us here, we probably like, no, that's not me. But I think if we took an honest pause, maybe it's not something that we are consciously acting out or acting upon, but perhaps it's something that rests deep within our hearts because we're trying to meet something, some sort of need, trying to prove that we're worthy. When in fact, God says, no, there's not one worthy. No, not one. So that's what Paul's writing about here. He's writing to not just Jewish Christians, but all Christians, saying, hey, you need to understand what this faith thing is about. And as we begin to understand faith and understand Abraham, I truly believe what we will see is that faith is one of the most beautiful parts of being a Christian. It's one of the most beautiful aspects that sets Christianity apart from every other belief system in the world.

And so this morning, I would invite you just to follow along as we journey through the life of Abraham just a little. And we'll begin in Romans, chapter four, beginning in verse one. And this is what it says. Paul writes, what then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh discovered in this matter? If in fact Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about, but not before God. So what does Scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. So Paul kind of just jumps right in. He goes, look, he goes, we just talked about boasting. We talked about how we shouldn't do that. All we boast in is Christ. And he goes, here's the reality. What do we say about Abraham? And he's saying this very specifically because he knows that there are people who he's writing to who believe that because of Abraham, because they're his descendants, they can boast and hold it over people. And he goes, So what do we say about this then? What have we discovered? If he was justified by works, yeah, then you could boast, but not before God. So what does Scripture say then? Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.

You see, here's what we need to understand first about faith. The first thing we need to understand is this faith isn't about what we do. It's about what God has done for us. What Paul is saying to the people he's writing to right now is he's going, look, you think you have something to boast about, but you don't. Faith isn't about you. It's about what God has done. You see it's not about all the things that Abraham did that you have inherited. It's about what God did for Abraham and for each of you and for us. That's what we get to boast about. In fact, in that passage, in verse three, Paul actually quotes the Old Testament. He quotes from the Book of Genesis when he says in verse three, Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. He's quoting from Genesis 15. In fact, we have Genesis 15, one through six up here for you. And it says this. It says, after this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision. Abram is Abraham, it's just before God changed his name. So let's catch up on that. So the Lord came to Abram in the vision. Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward. But Abram said, Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who inherits my estate is Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, You've given me no children, so a

servant of my household will be my heir. Then the word of the Lord came to him, this man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir. So God took Abram outside and said, look up at the sky and count the stars, if indeed you can count them. And then he said to him, so shall your offspring be. And here's our quote: and Abram believed the Lord, and he credited to him as righteousness. To catch everybody up on the story of Abraham, God had made a promise to Abraham and his wife Sarah. He had told them, he said, hey, you're going to have a son, and from your son will come many descendants, many nations, and it's a great promise. But there was a problem. They were old. Like, really old. In fact, Abraham does something that no guy should ever do. He tells God how old his wife is multiple times. He's like, God, you don't understand. She's really, really old. Bad idea. Bad idea. Like, just from the husband playbook of things not to do. That's number one, okay? Do not do that. If you're ever having a conversation, they're like, how old is your wife? She's young, real young, right? There's a reason when we go out, I never get carded anymore, okay? Like, lots of gray. It comes from working with students. Lots of gray, okay? But my wife will still get carded, and they're like, so how old are you? Do you have your ID? I never once have said, she's really old. My age. As old as I look. Same, right? That doesn't work. That's a problem. Okay? But Abraham, that's what he keeps telling God. From a scientific standpoint, he wasn't wrong. At this point, Abraham is about 100 years old. And so God comes to him and goes, hey, man, I want to reiterate my promise to you. He goes, Abraham, you're going to have a son, and this son will be your heir. And Abraham again looks at God, and he goes, you don't get it, do you? I have to give my estate, my inheritance to this other guy in my family who's like, a second or third cousin because I don't have an heir. And God goes, no, you don't get it. I'm going to give you a son. He goes, in fact, he goes, let me kind of give you a beautiful picture of what this looks like. And he goes, Come here. He goes, Come outside with me. He takes him outside, and he goes, look up at the sky. And I don't know when the last time it was that you looked up at the night sky and just marveled at the creation that is out there at the stars and the galaxies.

A few months back, I was in South Carolina speaking at a camp. And it was crazy. I stepped outside one night, and I just looked up at the sky, and I can't remember the last time I saw galaxies so crystal clear. In fact, I took a picture with my phone. And if you've ever tried to take a picture of the sky at night on your phone, you know how badly they turn out. Yet in this one, you could see the stars. And I sent it to my wife Elise, and I was like, look at this. Look how beautiful it is out here. And I remember looking up in this small little plot of land in South Carolina and maybe only seeing a few thousand stars. But back before all the pollution, all the population, God takes Abraham out into the wilderness and he goes, look up at the sky. I can only imagine how many stars and galaxies he could see. And so he takes him out and he goes, look at the sky and count the stars. At this point in scripture, maybe this is a little bit of me reading into it, I don't know. But at this point, I think Abraham kind of went the teenage guy route. Like, he's 100 years old, but he's not fully mature yet. And as God's talking to him, I think he started going, 1, 2, 3, 4 wait, did I count that one? 1, 2, 3. And this is where I think God gets a little bit cheeky with Abraham, a little bit sassy, like the humor in scripture is there. And he goes, if you can count them, bud. Right? Because I think Abraham's trying to and he realizes, oh, this is hard. And God's like, see? You can't count them. But Abraham, you who think that you will never have a child, you can't even count the stars out there, and that's what your

descendants will look like. He goes, that's the promise I have for you. And it's in that moment that Abraham believed, and it was credited to him as righteousness.

And here's what we need to understand, is that faith is just that it's trusting and believing that God. It's trusting and believing that God will do what he says. But can we just be honest for a moment? That is really, really hard. That is incredibly difficult. Even in the good times, let alone the bad. It's really hard to trust God if you're walking through difficulties in your marriage. It's really hard to trust God if you're getting picked on at school. It's hard to believe and trust God if you've just lost your job. It's really hard to believe and trust God if you struggle with mental health. But again, this is what sets faith apart. It's what sets Christianity apart from everything else. It's trusting and believing that God will do what he says he will do.

There's a band called Shane and Shane and some of you know Shane and Shane. In fact, we've sung a few of their songs here at Hershey Free. But they've recently written a song that's called You've Already Won. And the chorus of the song goes this way. It says, I'm fighting a battle that you've already won. No matter what comes my way, I will overcome. I don't know what you're doing, but I know what you've done. I'm fighting the battle that you've already won. That's faith. Faith doesn't mean this life is easy. It doesn't mean there's not hardship or pain, illness, death. But in the midst of the battle, in the midst of living this life, we know there's victory, we know there's hope. And faith is going, I trust that God overcame this, and I believe he will continue to do it. And I believe that he will see me through this to the end. Faith is trusting and believing God to do what he says he will do.

But I think we need to keep looking at what faith really is. And I want to keep digging into Romans. So if we pick up in verse four, we read this. Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God, who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. There's kind of like this unspoken agreement that when you do a job, you get paid for it. Right? Now, if you're a student and you're sitting in here, you're like, I do lots of jobs for my parents, I don't get paid for it, right? They give you food, they give you a house. Okay? That's payment right now, because when you get older, you have to pay for those yourself. But for most of us, if we work, there is unspoken expectation, obligation that we will receive something for it, right? And what Paul is saying here, he's going, look, if that's how you think Christianity works, you're wrong. You see, because the reality is like what we're trying to do is we're going, look at all the good things I've done. Give me salvation. But then he says right there in verse five, he goes to the one who does not work, but trusts God, who justifies the ungodly. You see what Paul is saying? He's going, look, let me remind you that there is none righteous. No, not one. So your good works mean diddly squat to God. You can't earn grace, you can't earn your way into heaven. But God, who died for the unjust, freely gives it to you. There's no obligation, there's no expectation other than God going, this is yours. And so this is what we come to understand about faith from this passage, then.

Faith, okay? When we look at this, faith is not something we deserve or we are owed. You can't earn your way to heaven. That much is clear, nor are we owed anything from God. We are

broken and messed up people. And Paul goes on, he gives this kind of again, he digs deeper in verses nine through 13, and what he does there is he brings in this concept of circumcision. And for the Jewish people, this was a sign that set them apart from everybody else. And they held it as this, hey, look what we have, look what we've done. Look what we deserve. And Paul goes, it doesn't work that way. It doesn't work that way. It doesn't matter what you've done, where you've lived, who you are, your wealth, your status, what acclaim you have, all the good things you do, none of those gets you into heaven. It's only by faith. And Paul wants us to understand that when it comes to walking with Jesus, when it comes to understanding the relationship we have with him, it's not about trying to do or say all the right things. It's about understanding the gift, the free gift that he extends to anyone who is willing to accept it. Faith is about understanding that we don't deserve it or are owed it, but something that God bestows upon us in his great love and mercy.

But I want to look at some of the concluding passage or verses in this passage. And if we jump into verse 18 through 22, this is what we read. So against all hope, Abraham in hope believed, and so became the father of many nations. Just as it had been said to him, so shall your offspring be. Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead since he was about 100 years old, and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he promised. This is why it is credited to him as righteousness. So there's a few things in this part of the text that I just want to unpack briefly. I want you to realize that everything was stacked against Abraham. That first phrase, against all hope. Everybody would have looked at Abraham and Sarah and be like, you guys are nuts for believing this. They would have said the same thing. Abraham said, you're old, it ain't going to happen. Choose somebody else. But instead, against all that, he believed. And because of his belief, because of his faith in God, he became the father of many nations. But check this out. It says this without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead. Sometimes faith means understanding that even in the midst of obstacles, we can still trust and believe in God, right? It means understanding that God is still at work even when we don't see it or understand it. But I also want you to realize something here as well. It says here, yet Abraham did not waver in his un-, or I'm sorry, he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but he was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God.

Here's what I want you to understand about faith, okay? Faith is an inward change that leads to outward transformation even as we wrestle with doubts and questions. And let me actually pose a question to you, and I don't want to see any type of physical response, I don't need that. This is just a reflective question for you. Have you ever questioned God? Have you ever doubted God? His plan, his goodness, his ability to get you through tough times? I have. Abraham did, too. Abraham had a lot of questions, a lot of doubts. In fact, we see him actually articulate them to God, right? We're old. God I've already set up a plan because it doesn't seem like yours is working. So I'm giving it to this random cousin over here. He's going to take everything. I think there are moments in our lives where subconsciously we don't always have faith. We have doubts. And we say, I'm going to figure out a backup plan just in case God's

doesn't work. We try to wrestle with questions, and these questions cause us to deconstruct our faith because we're like, man, there are just some things here that I don't understand, some things that are just, like, grabbing at my heart and really causing me to question who God is. And you see, the reality is it's okay to have doubts and ask questions. What's not okay is to stay there. See, part of healthy deconstruction is healthy reconstruction. And when it comes to faith, you see, faith transforms our hearts, which leads us to live radically different lives, which means that when we engage with doubts and questions as they come, it means we engage them in faith. Knowing that we serve a God who is greater than. Who is faithful, who has overcome. It doesn't mean that we get all the answers this side of heaven. I wish I could tell you that was the case. But it means that we're sustained through it all. Faith doesn't alleviate the doubts and questions. It allows for us to engage them well.

So what does this actually mean for you and for me? Because this is a great kind of case study on Abraham and the beginnings of understanding who he is as an individual, his relationship with God. But what does this mean for us? The first thing we need to remember is this, salvation is not generational, it's not conditional, and it's definitely not transactional. What it is, it's rooted in the grace of God, and it's something anyone can have through faith in God. And I want to make sure I make this very clear. To be a follower of Jesus, it's not about what you have, who you are, your pedigree. It's not about the degrees that you have, where you live, who you were before, who you are now, or who you will be. Salvation is about what Christ did, is doing, and will do. It's about the fact that he paid the debt that we couldn't afford to pay. And he said, I'm going to defeat this. All you have to do is accept it. It's not about trying to earn his favor. It's not about trying to say, look how I measure up compared to all these other horrible people throughout history. It's not going well. Look, I was born into a Christian family. No. It's not about trying to do enough good deeds to outweigh the bad. God doesn't have some big scale in front of the doors to heaven going, he didn't make it this time. That's not how he functions. Instead, what it is it's understanding that salvation is rooted in God's grace and by faith, by believing and trusting in the grace of God, the goodness of God, the love of God. That is what transforms who we are.

But when we understand faith, you also have to understand that you are living a life of freedom that has been freely given. There are a lot of people who think that being a Christian means you have all these rules that you have to follow, all these things that you have to do right. And the problem is, we never do that well. As Christians, we're just as screwed up as everybody else. We're broken people. It goes back to what we just read in Romans, right? The ungodly. We are broken, too. We need a good God who is gracious, right? But as followers of Jesus who live our life in faith, here's the cool thing. We're free. We're not in bondage anymore. We don't have to try to earn God's grace. We don't have to try to pay for it. We don't have to try to be better than the person sitting next to us, right? We can live in that freedom and go, look at me, set free indeed because of what the Savior did for me on that tree. We are free people. We're not held in bondage. We're not held by all these different parameters that the world tells us that's how you measure if you're good or not. Instead, we are held in the grace of God, and we live out that grace every day. By living in faith. You are free people. We are free indeed because of what our Savior did for us.



But it also means when you have faith again, having faith doesn't mean you don't have questions or doubt. It just means we don't stay there. In fact, if you're a reader, there's an author by the name of AJ Swabota. And AJ Swabota has been very honest about his wrestlings with doubt, with questions, and he actually wrote a book called *After Doubt*. If you find yourself, you're wrestling with doubts and questions, and you're trying to understand how this relates to our faith in God, I would encourage you to go pick up that book. You can find it on Amazon. It's a great read. And AJ is very honest about saying, hey, we all have those questions and doubts. They just manifest in different ways and different thoughts and questions at different points in all of our lives. And it's healthy to engage them. In fact, I tell students all the time, if you have a question about what we're studying, about what the Bible says, ask it. And if you don't get the answer to your question, or if somebody gives you a passive response like, oh, just believe God and it'll be okay. While that's true, that doesn't necessarily answer the question. And what I tell students all the time is like, keep moving up the ladder then. And if you have a question, let's figure it out together. And part of engaging doubts and questions well as living as people who have faith means we engage them looking for answers. Understanding we may not fully understand the answers this side of eternity, but not allowing for them to overrun us. Because we have seen how God has been faithful both before our time, in our present time, and how he will continue to be faithful in the future.

And having faith also means that we are trusting and believing in a good God to sustain you, even in the midst of the unknown and the doubts. There are a lot of unknowns in this world. We don't know what the next moment is going to hold, right? We don't know if I'm going to fall off the stage or not. It almost happened, right? We don't know what's going to happen the second we walk out those doors. Right now, we don't even know if it's still foggy out. But the reality is this is that even in the midst of those unknowns, even when we're wrestling with deep, deep questions and doubts, saying, God, but how do I keep having faith when I'm wrestling with cancer? How do I hold on to faith when my marriage seems to be falling apart? God, how do I have faith when it seems like everything in this world goes against it? What we realize is that it's about trusting that God is who he says he is, and believing in the promises that he has told us, the promises he has fulfilled, and the promises that he will continue to fulfill. It doesn't mean trying to figure it out on your own. It means relying on the God who got you here. It's trusting in God to sustain you. Again, it doesn't mean it's easy. But by faith, there is hope. By faith, we see how God has sustained and will continue to sustain us in those moments.

The last few verses in this passage end this way. This is what we read from Paul when he wraps up Romans 4. He says this, the words "it was credited to him" were not written for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness - for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. Faith is for all who are willing to accept the free gift of God. We're not justified. We're not made whole by anything we do or say. Instead, we're made whole by him. Faith isn't easy, but faith is something that will radically change our lives. And my hope for you today is that as we've talked about faith, as we've looked at the beginning of our exploration of

the life of Abraham, is that maybe we've come to understand faith just a little bit more, and maybe it's impacting us to make some changes in our lives. And maybe if you're here today or even watching online and you're like, man, I have questions about this. Good. That's the best place to start. We'll have people down here after we're done who can pray and talk with you about that. You could talk to me. You could talk to anybody on our staff. You could submit, like, a prayer request or a question through our online bulletin. We would love to have those conversations with you. I will tell you this, while faith may be hard, I will tell you it's the best decision you can make to follow Jesus and to trust in him and to believe in who he says he is. And it will radically impact your life both now and forever.

Let's pray. Awesome Father, we are so thankful for you, for the good gift that you have given to us. Thank you for making us whole through your son. God, thanks that it's not about all the things that we do. Thank you that you don't have a cosmic scale outweighing the good and the bad for me, God, because, man, would I be up a creek. God, thank you that it's not based upon my heart and my own brokenness. God, I pray for each of us here today, those watching online, Father, that Father, you just help us to have a strong faith even in the midst of difficulties, the unknown. Father, may we be committed to trusting in you, believing in you. May you even just help us, even this day, Father, to see the goodness of God. Thank you for, in the midst of our own brokenness, that you sent your Son to be the way out. Father, thank you for explaining to us it's by grace that we have been saved through faith. Help us to live that faith out, Father. Help us to grow in it, to be stretched in it. Help us to believe and trust in you more and more each day, Father. And we pray this in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.