

Pentecost 2 / June 7, 2026

Romans 4:16

*“That 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 adherents of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham.”*

### Faith, Promise and Grace

Nothing distinguishes the faith God reveals in scripture more than these three things; faith, promise and grace. The miraculous grabs people’s attention, but we still need faith to believe. The miraculous may reinforce the things we believe, but we need to believe in the first place. Many times, faith may seem to be simply the suspension of disbelief. We don’t see how it could be possible, but we will try to believe it anyway. But faith is more than the suspension of disbelief. Faith is the firm belief in the grace of God and His promises, especially His promises in Christ Jesus. Jesus criticized the people of His day for demanding signs before they believed. We think that if we saw we would believe. However, in God’s revelation in the bible, faith comes first and is foremost. The miraculous follows, supports and emphasizes what is to be believed. Rather than creating faith, the miraculous supports the faith that has previously been created by the power and promise of God’s word.

Abraham is a case in point. The greatest miracle in Abraham’s life was the birth of Issac, which occurred when he and Sarah his wife were advanced in years. Advanced in years is an understatement. Sarah was ninety years old and Abraham was a hundred years old. When Abraham saw God’s promise come to fruition in the birth of Issac, his faith was strengthened not created. In fact, His faith was strengthened exponentially. His faith was made so strong that when the Lord tested his faith by telling him to sacrifice Issac, Abraham was fully prepared to do what God asked, believing God would somehow keep his promise to bring blessing to all nations through his offspring. But first and foremost, God gave Abraham His promise and by His grace Abraham believed God and for the sake of his faith, God counted him righteous in His sight.

God values nothing more highly than faith in His promises. Not faith because we see His miracles, but faith because we believe His word. Miraculous signs may reinforce faith, but God’s word creates faith. Jesus appeared to the disciples the evening of His resurrection and showed Himself alive. Thomas was notably absent. When told that Jesus had risen, he famously replied, *“Unless I see in His hands the*

*mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into His side, I will never believe.*” Talk about demanding! When he saw Jesus risen from the dead and believed, Jesus said, *“Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”* John wrote his gospel so that we would believe. God wants us to believe through word and witness of the Spirit in Scripture. Paul in the letter to Romans says, *“faith comes through hearing and hearing through the word of Christ.”* Faith believes the promises of God, not as the suspension of disbelief, but from a heart touched by God’s grace and filled with God’s love in Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit. Faith receives and believes the promise of God’s grace in Christ.

Paul uses Abraham as the pattern for God’s action in our lives. The word of the Lord came to Abraham when he was a pagan, worshipping the false gods of the ancient near east. The word of the Lord came to Abraham when he was, in the words of Paul in Ephesians, *“dead in trespasses and sins.”* So the word of the Lord first comes to all of us. God came to Abraham when he had no faith and through the word and working of the Holy Spirit, He created faith in his heart, as He does in all of us who believe. The Lord created faith in his heart, called and empowered him to do something his family and friends must have thought was the silliest thing a person could do, move a thousand kilometers away to a foreign land, a stranger in a strange land. Silly or not, Abraham believed the Lord and the Lord counted it to him as righteousness. That’s how God works in our lives too. He comes to us when we are spiritually blind, dead in our sins and transgressions. He comes to us through His word and by the working of the Holy Spirit He opens our hearts to faith that we would believe His promises and receive Jesus as our Saviour. He comes to us through the word, which is why it is important for us to be in the word, daily, day in and day out. Faith comes not just once at the start, but always through the hearing of the word of Christ.

God gave Abraham a promise. He said, *“And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* Wouldn’t it be a miracle that one man and one woman would become a great nation through whom God would bless all nations. But before that miracle there would be another one. Abraham and Sarah would have a son through whom God would work this miracle. All Abraham had to do was believe it and wait. Believe it he did for many years, but when he was closing in on a hundred and Sarah was approaching ninety, he wondered how and when it would happen. He received his miracle after many years of waiting in

faith, in the birth of Issac in their old age. Abraham believed and finally saw the first-fruits of God's promise in the birth of Issac. We see the fruits of God's promises to Abraham through Issac in Jesus. In Jesus, God offers the blessings of forgiveness and salvation to all nations. All who believe receive. All who believe receive now, the blessings of forgiveness, peace with God and the Holy Spirit. All who wait in faith will receive the greatest miracle in the fulness of time, in a share in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Faith comes through hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. Abide in the word, it is the power by which God creates faith. It is the power by which God brings faith to fulfillment in the promise of resurrection to everlasting life.

The word is the power by which God brings His promises to us. Faith is the means by which we receive God's promises, but grace is the foundation. Grace is where God's intervention in our lives begins. Grace is the undeserved kindness of God's love, expressed in particular, as forgiveness. Grace is expressed and received most pointedly and importantly in forgiveness for the sake of Jesus, who as Paul says in our text *"was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification."* Abraham was a great man. He lived four thousand years ago and he is spoken of with familiarity throughout the world to this day. Abraham was a great man, because God chose him to be great according to His purposes. In and of himself, there was nothing to differentiate Abraham from any one else in ancient Mesopotamia. For His own reasons and purposes, God revealed Himself to Abraham by His word and opened his heart to believe His promises. That's grace, the undeserved kindness of God by which he calls us out of the darkness of sin and spiritual death, makes us alive in Christ and illuminates our hearts with the light of His love.

Abraham is remembered foremost for his faith, which existed long before he saw any evidences that would prove the veracity of the promises God gave him. One of the most famous passages in the bible is Genesis 15:6 which says, *"And he believed the Lord and the Lord counted it to him as righteousness."* Just prior to our text Paul refers to Abraham as *"the father of all who believe."* Abraham is celebrated as the father of faith, since he is the one to whom God first spoke His promise of universal blessing, which is fulfilled in the blessing of Christ. Abraham believed God, but his faith wasn't always unshakeable. Sometimes Abraham wavered. When God told Abraham he and Sarah would conceive and have a son in their great old age, Abraham laughed in his heart and said, *"Shall a child be born to a man who is hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years, bear a child?"*

Grace was that God forgave Abraham's doubts, as He forgave other of Abraham's sins in the years before and after, as He forgives our sins. Grace is the foundation of our relationship with God through faith in His promises. Grace is forgiveness especially and in particular for the sake of Christ, "*who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*" Grace is God's kindness in Christ Jesus, given not to those who deserve it, but to those who don't deserve it, to those who despite their unworthiness, receive it as a gift through faith.

All God's promises to Abraham and in all the scriptures are fulfilled in Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus, God pours out the riches of His grace in forgiveness and fulfills His promises, especially of salvation, resurrection and eternal life. God promised the first woman that one of her offspring would crush the head of the serpent who deceived her, while Himself suffering great injury. In Christ the God of peace has crushed Satan under His feet, suffering the injury of the cross. God promised Abraham that one of his offspring would bring blessing to all nations. Jesus brings the blessing of forgiveness, reconciliation with God and eternal life to the nations. He is the one to which the faith of Abraham and who follow in His faith, leads. He is the fulness of God in bodily form. He is the fulfillment of the promises of God in the renewal of the human race as the family of God. In Him and through Him we receive the grace of God. Through the word of Christ, we receive the faith to believe. In Him we will receive the fulness of blessing in our share of His resurrection to a new and eternal life. God who called us through His word and given us faith to believe His promises by the working of the Holy Spirit, keep us in His grace until His promises are made full in eternal life. In Jesus' Name. Amen