



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 4:18-25

"The Faith of Abraham"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The subject of this morning, as we turn to our exposition of our Epistle to the Romans, is "The Faith of Abraham." Men have, for a long time, been trying to understand our troubled age. The solutions have been manifold. "For Karl Marx," Samuel Miller wrote, a few years back, "It was the millennial age of the proletariat; for Spengler, the twilight of civilization; for Whitman, the age of the common man; for Henry Adams, a dismal fate. For Nietzsche it was decadent and yet the door to new possibilities; for Dostoevsky it was dangerously demonic; for Bury, the age of liberty; for T. S. Eliot, a wasteland; for Ortega, the upward rise of the barbarian; for Kafka, a nightmare; for Auden, the age of anxiety. For politicians, it was the age of democracy; for scientists, of space travel and unprecedented power, and for artists a new loneliness and a deeper exile." Miller went on to write, "If we have had our difficulty in deciding what the age was really like, it is not strange. Its man-made wonders were spectacular; yet so were man's crimes. If we handled nature like giants, we handled ourselves like idiots."

One could obtain some general agreement that our age is an age characterized by a great deal of secularity. Spiritual forces are no longer the unifying bond for art, politics, history, and philosophy. Birth, puberty, marriage, sin and death, once pivotal points of great spiritual significance for most of us, are now natural, biological, social, and primarily clinical. Mr. Miller says that, "As for advertising,

it is the religious expression of the secularity of the age, placarding the superficial glory of the material products of our age. No longer are we to be saved by grace. We are to be saved by gadgets, which become ours by the sufferings of monthly payments. In this way we may expect, so we are told, to lose our money but gain our soul."

And then Miller comments, "Salvation was never more ardently proffered by the church in its most fervent evangelism to save the world than it is now by frenetically hepped-up hucksters, who promise the full delight of heaven to those who are bored in their chrome-plated hell, by giving them more of the same sort of thing." The sad thing about all of this, to me, is that now we have, in our evangelical world, evangelists of a fairly orthodox gospel. It is generally Arminian, not the pure gospel of sovereign grace, but it can be called an orthodox gospel to that extent. And they are using the same methods, deceiving the simple-minded saints and extracting from them their giant sums of money for their evangelical conglomerates. How gullible the saints are! And do not think for one moment that we are talking about anything other than ourselves, us, because we, too, have fallen for this.

Not too long ago I received a telephone call, in fact this last week, to be exact, from someone who used to attend Believers Chapel. He was puzzled over the fact that the church that he attends is demanding a certain amount of money from each one of the members in order to accomplish a particular task that they want to accomplish. And this young man called me to ask me whether he should go ahead and give them the amount of money specifically, or whether he would be better off if perhaps he risked some of his savings on a speculative security making an agreement with the Lord to give the church the profits from that speculation.

Well, of course, I think it's an extremely sad thing when an evangelical church makes demands on its membership to accomplish a particular building task. To demand a certain amount of money from them so far as I can tell is just blatantly unscriptural. And so I expressed to him, over the telephone, that as far as I was concerned, it was a basic mistake on their part to make such demands. But, I also thought it was rather foolish to speculate, with his own savings and make an

agreement with the Lord, that if he made a profit he would give the profit to that particular church. But we are very gullible, and I was just amazed that someone who said that he had attended the chapel for a considerable period of time would have such views concerning money and the Christian church.

I would plead with every one of you to read what the Bible has to say about your money and the Lord's work. It is very important that you do that. That is one reason that we have, today, the situation that we have in evangelicalism, with millions being poured into certain men because of the fact that they have used modern methods in obtaining the money. Because you do not read your Bibles, you do not really understand what the Bible has to say about giving. And I speak to you, in the sense of you evangelicals including myself. We do not read the word of God. If we did then we would not be bothered by such. And as last week, I read the letter to you from the man who had listened to the radio ministry in Oklahoma City. It does bring reproach upon the name of the Lord. And we are even seeing it now in the newspapers with the great emphasis that is being placed upon marshalling spiritual believers, or believers in spiritual things, behind political view points.

Now is there a way out? Well, Abraham lived in an advanced civilization. It could be argued that his civilization was just as advanced as ours, not having perhaps some of the gadgets that we have, but certainly as civilized. And one would think, in the light of what the Scripture says about Abraham, that he certainly had a workable answer. They had been very sure of themselves long before Abraham came on the scene; so sure of themselves that that civilization had built a giant tower to heaven to proclaim their self-sufficiency. They wanted to make their name great, and so they built the Tower of Babel. It was, however, to their own destruction. But man never learns the truth about himself without the efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit. It is, therefore, very likely that the patriarch lived in the midst of great ungodliness, yet he became great in the eyes of the Lord. Abraham's name is mentioned one hundred and eighty-eight times in the Karan. He's, of course, regarded as the father of Judaism. He is great in Christianity, in that he is the father of the faithful.

Father of faithful both of the Jews and the Gentiles, Paul tells us here. It's even possible that Sarah, his wife, is the great example of the woman of faith, as well.

Well where did Abraham find the unifying center of life? Where did he find the *raison d'être* that really worked, that enabled him to be the man of faith in the midst of the civilization of his day? What was the secret of this eminent Bedouin chief who, thousands of years ago, wandered from pasture to pasture over the valleys and plains of the land to which God called him, the life and the land that the Lord God had promised him? Well the secret of Abraham is found right here in this section that we have read this morning for our Scripture reading. And the answer is not difficult to understand. It's only difficult to practice. Abraham's secret was the life of faith, faith in the Word and character of God. And the nature of that faith is before us here in these verses that we are to look at.

In fact that's the first division of the message this morning, "The Nature of Abraham's Faith. And we look first at its impediments. Remember, the argument, to this point, the apostle has set forth the way of salvation. He has said that a man becomes just on the principle of grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In the 4th chapter in the letter to the Romans, he has sought to show that this is not a new doctrine, but this is the doctrine that the Old Testament proclaimed. In fact, he has already said in this book that there is just one gospel, and this gospel is the same gospel that was promised in the Old Testament Scriptures which is not reached its fruition in the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So using Abraham as the great illustration of the faith, he pointed us to Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6, and the text that said, "Abraham believed in the Lord, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Paul told us there were two kinds of people. There were workers and non-workers. Now workers for salvation never attain unto righteousness. It's the non-workers that attain unto righteousness. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." The apostle lets us know that when you believe for your salvation, you are not working. Faith is a non-working methodology.

So he shows from the illustration of Abraham, which is paralleled by David, that a man is justified, not by the things that he does, but by believing in what God has done for his salvation. That excludes all of the hopes that we might have, hopes of salvation through our good works, through our intelligence, through the fact that we are born in a Christian land, supposedly, where Christian things are professed by a large number of our society. It means, too, that we are not justified because we're a member of a religious organization, whether it is Roman Catholic or whether it is Protestant; the apostle argues that salvation does not come from membership in a church body. Furthermore, he argues that it does not come from prayers. It does not come from signing a decision card. It does not come from giving money to the Christian work that may be being done. It does not come from observing the ordinances. It does not come from water baptism. It does not come from sitting at the Lord's table. It does not come from any kind of sacramental system. Paul says, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Now he has made the point very well. I could talk about this for another hour or two, and I wouldn't make it nearly so pungently, and so succinctly, as the apostle has already made it. Now a person who listened to Paul, and who knew the Old Testament, might have some questions. We do have our rationalizations, you know, and when a person tells us some theological point with which we are not completely sympathetic, we can think of lots of ways by which we may rationalize our way out of the difficulty. One of them, obviously, had been tried on Paul before. And it was this, it's true, Abraham was justified by faith. The Scriptures say that, but remember Paul, he was circumcised. And so his justification is to be traced not simply to the fact that he believed, but also the fact that he was circumcised. Now the fact that that doctrine was preached widely is evident from the Epistle to the Galatians because that is the heart of the apostle's treatment of those six chapters which he wrote to the Galatian believers. Evidently, there was widely spread, the view that a man was justified not simply by believing in the facts of the gospel concerning Christ, but also by receiving the rite of circumcision.

Now we don't have much of that today. The apostle did not deal with the difficulty that we have today because it required a little bit of time for it to develop. Today the difficulty is that there are many, many groups of people, not simply Roman Catholic, but Protestant as well, in the professing Christian community who affirm that we are justified not simply by faith in Jesus Christ, but by undergoing the rite of water baptism. And last week I sought to show that those two rights, circumcision in the Old Testament, and water baptism in the New Testament share an essential oneness, in that if circumcision is a work, it is clear that baptism is a work also for it is the same kind of activity in essence. And if it is a work, then it is not a method of salvation, for Paul says salvation comes to the non-workers. "To him that worketh is the reward reckoned of debt, not of grace. But to him that worketh not, his faith is counted for righteousness."

So someone, evidently, often said to Paul as he debated the gospel over the world of which he was a part. "But Paul, Abraham was circumcision." And so Paul simply reminded them of a fact of the Old Testament Scriptures. In Genesis chapter 15 he was pronounced justified and that is two chapters before the description of his circumcision is given, and so the simple answer is, but Genesis 15 comes before Genesis 17. It's 15, 16, 17, not 17, 16, 15. Now I have a hunch, the apostle, every now and then, gave away to the old nature too, like some of us and probably said it just like that. When I get to heaven I'll ask him if he ever did that. I don't intend to do that. But I know I'm pretty weak, and a lot of people do write me letters every now and then, frequently unsigned, and tell me that I'm doing something of the same thing.

I just got one this morning that's why I'm still thinking about it. [Laughter] This person wrote me a long letter, accused me of being proud and self-righteous because I was a Calvinist and said that I ought to have sympathy with others. I do have sympathy with others. I was of that other persuasion. I do, but I want you to have the joy that I have in my own convictions. He called my faith a "so-called" faith. And that's all right for him to call mine a "so-called" faith, and at the same time work me over the coals for being a proud you know what. Now the interesting thing to me is that he sent me a couple of books. And then he didn't sign it. He wouldn't sign the letter, so I

cannot reply to him. That's why I'm frustrated. [Laughter] I don't know who it is. I'd like to catch him in the corner sometime [Laughter] and reply to him. And tell him that one of the books he sent me is one of the reasons why some of my friends have become of the same persuasion that I am. But anyway, now that's not in the notes, is it? [Laughter]

Let's go back to Romans chapter 4. The apostle had dealt with these questions, and I know that every now and then he said like a good friend of mine, Clarence Mason, of the Philadelphia College of the Bible, used to say when he met some of the people that upset him about other matters, he would say, "Now Lord, just let me yield to the old nature for just a few seconds here, so that I can answer this brother." [Laughter] So Paul answered them concerning the question of circumcision by just reminding them that Abraham was justified before he was circumcised. So that's the question that the apostle dealt with immediately preceding.

Now, having answered that particular question, the question that arises logically in the latter part of chapter 4 is, "But Paul if it is then true that we are justified by faith and we are not justified through the rite of circumcision, just what is this saving faith that you are talking about? What is the essence of saving faith? You say a man is justified by faith, what is faith or what do you mean by faith?" And that is the subject of the last verses in chapter 4 in my opinion. And what he will say is this simply, in case we don't make this as plain as it could be made, what he says very simply is that saving faith is trust in the God of the resurrection. That is the essence of the faith of Abraham. It is the essence of the faith of a believer today who is saved. In the case of Abraham, he was given the promise, remember, as he looked toward the stars in the sky, "So shall thy seed be."

Now in the fulfillment of that promise that there should be a seed from Abraham that would be as numerous as the stars of the heavens, it would have been necessary for a resurrection to take place. So when Abraham said, "Amen, Lord," or when he believed in the Lord, he was affirming a faith in the God of the resurrection. Of course, Abraham did not believe in Jesus of Nazareth whose mother's name was Mary and whose father's name was Joseph. He didn't yet know those facts. They are unfolded in the progress of Divine Revelation. But the essence of his faith is the same, and the

object of his faith is the same, God who would in time reveal that the redeemer in whom Abraham did trust would have the name Jesus, that he would be born of a virgin, that his mother's name was Mary and that his father's name was Joseph, and so on. So what we are saying is that the faith of Abraham is essentially the faith of every one of us today. Faith in the same triune God, faith in a redeemer to come, the details of whose person and work he was not yet fully cognizant, but in whom he implicitly, and explicitly, believed so far as the person is concerned. And this faith, this unswerving trust in the God of the resurrection is a faith that saves.

Perhaps it would be helpful before we look at these verses rather briefly, for they are quite simple, I think, to say something about the life of Abraham to remind some of you who were not here when we went through those earlier chapters of the Book of Genesis a year or so ago. Remember that Abraham, at age seventy, had been called out of Ur of the Chaldees. He had been called out to a land that he did not know about. He went out not knowing whether he was going. And having left his land with his family, he eventually arrived in the land that the God of glory had led him to.

Abram's name means "exalted father," but he was barren. Scripture makes a great deal over that, not only because in the east it was regarded as a reproach not to have children. But this pertains to the promise, the promised seed. Abram's name was "exalted father." That was a constant source of embarrassment to him. The Orientals, particularly in those days, were men who were very inquisitive and very given to palaver. They had plenty of time to palaver, and they took advantage of it. There are a few Orientals in our midst in the western world still who love to palaver. We all have some friends who love to palaver and some also who are inquisitive, to whom we say, every now and then, you just mind your own business. But you couldn't do that in the east because it was considered courteous to treat them well. And so, all kinds of inquisitive questions were asked. They asked questions like, if you were there, "Are you married?" "Yes." "Do you have a wife?" "Yes." "Is she pretty?" And then, "How many children do you have? What are their names? What kind of

house do you live in? How large is it? What's the square footage, in effect?" And various other types of things that they felt like asking.

Now Abram lived right on the road from the north to the south, and so it was one of the great trade routes. And so, he was acquainted with all of the men who went back and forth, and being a man of considerable property, he had to entertain them. It was, of course, expected of him that he should be hospitable. So they would meet and these Orientals would say to him, "What is your name?" And the inevitable question, "What is your name?" would be followed by, "exalted father," "Oh how wonderful, how many children do you have?" "None." He would always anticipate it. He would always be embarrassed by it, I know.

Dr. Barnhouse, who writes rather extensively concerning this, says that he knew a man whose name was Wrench who divided the people he met into two classes, those that made fun of his name, and those that did not. Some said, "Are you Mr. Monkey Wrench? Are you Mr. Left Handed Wrench?" And so on. And then he said he knew a man named Meek who had been asked over a hundred times was he the Meek who inherited the earth?

So Abram was exposed to these questions about his name. What made it even more embarrassing was that probably the gossip around the tents in which they lived inevitably turned to, "Who is sterile? Is it Sarah or is it Abram?" And finally, as you know in the 16th chapter in the Book of Genesis, Sarah finally took it in hand to give Hagar, her Egyptian handmaid to Abram and as a result of this union, that settled the question of who was sterile, but nevertheless, it was an act that was the product of the flesh in scheming in order to produce a seed that God had promised to Abram.

Well that was sixteen years after Abram had been called by God in Ur of the Chaldees. Thirteen more years so far as Genesis is concerned, everything was silent, whether that was for discipline for that act of seeking to fulfill the promise of God by his own strength and power, or not. The Bible doesn't say, but eventually when Abram is ninety-nine years of age, God appeared to him again, and he confirmed the promises that he had given to him in that 17th chapter of the Book of

Genesis. And he also said Abram I'm going to change your name. Your name is not going to be Abram, "exalted father," but it's going to be Abraham, "father of a multitude."

So you can just imagine the family gathering, they're all there the next day and Abram says, "The Lord has just appeared to me, and incidentally, I'm going to change my name." And you could see the thoughts that went through their minds, it's too much for the old man, he's finally had to yield, it's going to be Mr. Johnson from now on, rather than Abraham, Johnson, or Smith, or some insignificant name like that. And he said, "I've been called exalted father, but my name from now on is going to be father of a multitude." [Laughter] I can see the rest of the people turning away, the servants turning away to the sideboard or whatever was about them and chuckling and smiling trying to keep the smiles off of their faces. "Father of a multitude," well the old man just couldn't take it. They were stunned. He's beginning to get ideas. He's gone around the bend.

Well it may have seemed that way, but really what God was doing was bringing Abraham to the place where he would just trust in his word. After all he had said in the beginning in that chaos, "Let there be light." And there was light. And now he's going to say to these two people who are dead physically. Abraham is ninety-nine. Sarah is ninety. And he's going to say, "Let there be Isaac." And there will be Isaac, the child of the promise because in the final analysis, Isaac is to be an illustration of the Lord Jesus Christ. One born supernaturally, not as supernaturally as our Lord, but supernaturally by the promise of God to illustrate both our Lord and also believers who, too, are born of the promise of the word of God, as Paul argues in the 9th chapter of this same Epistle to the Romans.

Now that's the background, and we turn now to this 4th chapter and the 18th verse and we notice the impediments to the faith of Abram. We read, "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 be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the dead-ness of Sarah's womb." These were large and imposing impediments to faith. Paul puts them in this way in order to stress the fact that this faith that Abram

exercised when he said, "Amen," to God's promises, and when, in the 17th chapter, he fell down before the Lord God, at his feet in token of appropriation of the promises, it was a magnificent expression of faith. "He considered not his own body that was now dead, when he was about a hundred years old." It was as Chrysostom put it, "Against human hope, in the hope which is of God." Paul may mean that Abraham was beyond the time of hoping by the expression, "against hope," that may mean literally beyond hope, in the original text but it seems more likely, to me, that he meant simply beyond human expectations, beyond human calculations, beyond those calculations, yet in hope, he believed.

C. E. B. Cranfield has written a rather recent commentary on the Greek text of the letter to the Romans and at this point in his commentary he cites Charles Wesley's lines, "In hope, against all human hope, Self-desperate, I believe; Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees, And looks to that alone; Laughs at impossibilities, And cries: It shall be done!" This is really the ancient struggle, which is just as modern as nineteen eighty, between the human and divine viewpoints. And this is lived out in the individual lives of all of the saints every day, for our Christian living. For really the test that faces us every day is, "Shall we follow the divine viewpoint, or shall we follow the human viewpoint?" Shall we follow, for example, in the financial work of the local church, the divine viewpoint or shall we follow the human viewpoint? Shall we in the preaching of the gospel of the local church, shall we follow the divine viewpoint or shall we follow the human viewpoint? Shall we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and rely upon the Holy Spirit to move men to faith in Christ, or shall we seek to help the Holy Spirit by our methods and by our means? And then in our daily life, individually, when we face the trials of life or the puzzles of life, or the problems of our children or the problems of our parents, whatever it may be, shall we look at this from the divine stand point as we seek to find his will in the word of God, or shall we follow the human view point? It really comes down to that.

Now I don't have anything against the use of Christian psychiatry and psychology in certain extreme cases, but really one of the tragedies of the evangelical church today is that there is the need for Christian psychiatrists and Christian psychologists that evidently exists today. In the seminary in

Chicago in which I am teaching, on Friday night, we were discussing doctoral programs, and it was very striking to me. They were discussing doctoral programs in systematic theology and doctoral programs in psychology. In the psychological department of this Christian institution they anticipate that they will have thirty people applying each year for the doctorate in Christian Psychology. In systematic theology, I'm sure it would be nothing like that; although that specific thing was not discussed, but that is an appalling fact, that we should have, and then in discussing it the men went on to say that the department has asked for this because this is the need. I don't know the truthfulness or not. I assume that they are speaking very truthfully.

The need is an astonishing thing because most of the problems that we face are found right here in the Bible. And we are not reading the Bible. One of the reasons that the Christians need psychology and need psychiatry is because they are not reading the Bible. They are not really studying the word of God. The Bible is sufficient for us. It is sufficient as a guide as the Holy Spirit uses it. We are, in effect, saying the word of God is insufficient when we appeal so strongly to Christian psychology and Christian psychiatry. There are times, extreme cases where that may be justifiable. I don't want to attack that whole movement because I don't know enough to do it, but I do know this, that if we were to read the Bible and study the Scriptures, we would discover that we have far less need for the medicines of such men.

Now, you see, it really comes down, in my mind, I may be very simplistic, but it really comes down in my mind to this question of whether we will follow the human or whether we will follow divine viewpoint. Now we must read and study the word of God if we are to follow God's viewpoint. And Abram was strong in faith and he gave glory to God by following the divine viewpoint. In fact that expression in verse 20 that he was strong in faith, giving glory to God, expresses the validity of the method by which God justifies men because if we're justified by works then, of course, God does not get all of the glory. But he says he will not give his glory to anyone else. And the fact that we are justified by faith is the method by which God is given the glory. So he became strong in faith giving glory to God. Oh how glorified God is by believers who will believe

him in the experiences of life. And we see the magnificent deliverances that God gives to us when we believe him.

There is an interesting reading in the Greek text in verse 19. In the 19th verse the Authorized Version it says, "He considered not his own body," but in most of the modern edited texts of the New Testament that negative is not found in the translations because it's not found in the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament. And so in those versions it reads, "And not weak in faith, he considered his own body." My text that I'm preaching from, the Authorized Version says "He considered not his own body." Now I think the negative should be omitted, but the interesting thing about this is that the truth is the same either way. For example, Abram was faced with a problem. God gave him a promise of this seed, but he's now ninety-nine years of age. He's past the age of begetting children. Sarah is ninety. She's past the age of generation. So being not weak in faith, he didn't consider what he saw in his body. That is, he did not yield to unbelief and say, "It cannot be done because my body is dead."

If we include the negative, that's the sense. If we eliminate the negative it is not being weak in faith, he considered his body. He looked at his body, and he saw that he could not naturally have any children and he took a good look at that ninety year old wife of his that he loved very much, and he knew that she could not beget children. But still he believed the word of God. In other words, he followed the divine viewpoint. That's what Paul means then. "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, and thus, giving glory to God."

What was it that sustained Abraham? Well someone might say, "Well he lived back in the days when men trusted God." Or maybe you would say, "He lived in the days when God occasionally appeared." It was like an electric shock every now and then and you know God would appear and thus we believed in God because, well, we saw him every now and then. Like some of my friends say, "Oh I just wish I could see one angel, just one, one little glimpse of an angel, and that

would help my faith." Now really I have a friend who is a professor of church history at a theological institution in Jackson Mississippi, the reformed seminary there. And we were talking about demons. And he said, "Oh if I could just see one little demon, I could be assured of my faith in demons." He was joking, but there are people who are like that you know.

So we look at Abram and say, "Well he had a little glimpse every now and then. That's why he had faith." No, you'll notice that the apostle traces his faith to two things. It was, first, the promise of God. And do you know that we have more promises than Abram? We have far more Revelation than Abraham had. Not only that, but he also was encouraged by the faithfulness of God. We read, "He staggered not at the promise of God," verse 21, "Being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." So it was the word of God and the character of God that was the source of Abram's faith. Why do we not have faith? Because we're not acquainted with the promises, we don't read the promises. And in not reading the promises, we don't become acquainted with the promisor. And so our trust in the character of God is deficient. The Bible says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." You'll not have faith if you get down on your knees and pray, "Oh God, give me faith." The Holy Spirit says get up off your knees and read the Bible. That's what the Scriptures say. You won't have faith if you go to see the preacher. You won't have faith if you go to see the psychiatrist, or the psychologist. You gain faith from the word of God. That's why we are so weak, and why the human viewpoint prevails so often.

So he was encouraged by the promises of God. He was encouraged by the faithfulness of God. The best biblical definition of faith that I know of is found in Paul's words in Acts 27:25, "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told to me." What a simple definition of faith. Simplistic Paul, very simplistic, but true, that is, simply, believing that things are and shall be just as God says they are. The gospel of a crucified Savior is to be believed in the same way, that is, the cross is the heart of a work of the Son that is an effective, penal, substitutionary satisfaction rendered to the holiness and justice of God for sinners, is what we need

for justification. And it is for all without exception, though not for all without distinction. There we read in Scripture, "It shall be even as it was told me."

Christ died for sinners. I'm a sinner, the Scriptures say. I must trust him for my salvation and so I come to him and receive as a free gift, salvation. If you ask me how I know I'm going to heaven. It's not because of anything in me. I'm far worse than my enemies, far worse than that fellow who wrote me that letter. He just doesn't know everything about me. If he knew everything about me, he'd write it in red ink and write six or eight pages and wouldn't mind signing his name either, because it's all true. I am that bad, but Christ has died for sinners, and my hope is in the blood that was shed. And God has assured me that that is sufficient. Not only to cover my sins in the sense of covering up those things that I have done, but providing me with a positive righteousness so that I am justified before him, declared righteous before God. What a magnificent position I have before the Lord, God. What a sinner, and what a salvation, and what glory God gets from saving such a sinner.

Well, we read here, "Therefore," for this reason, because of Abraham's faith given by God, "It was imputed to him for righteousness." Now Paul, like a good preacher, makes this application, probably did it before 12:00. He says, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." In other words, the same essential faith is the faith that justifies today. It's faith in the God of the resurrection. "Faith who calls things that be not as though they were." Sure, the object of faith is fuller now that the Divine Revelation has been systematically and historically unveiled and the progress of Revelation has developed. Of course, it is more that we believe so far as the identification of the redeemer is concerned. But it is the same essential faith. The essence is the same. It's faith in the God of the resurrection. It is a personal faith. And it's faith in a God who redeems.

The rationale of that saving faith is given in the last verse, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." I've said something about the possibilities of

interpretation in the Believers Bible bulletin, and I'll let you read it for the sake of time. When Christ was raised from the dead that did not justify, that was the evidence that the death had justified. It is God's "Amen" to Christ's "It is finished," so the resurrection. In the cross we see justification completed. Looking at the open tomb, we see justification accepted. We sometimes sing the hymn "One Day, Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me; Buried He carried my sins far away; Rising, He justified freely forever;" I don't usually sing that line, if you notice when we sing it here. That lines in the chorus, so I'll be with you on the chorus, if I'm not in the stanzas. I don't sing that, "Rising, He justified," because it seems to me that what the apostle teaches here is that the resurrection of Christ is the evidence that the justification has been completed. We're not justified by the resurrection. We're justified by his death. As he says in the 9th verse of the 5th chapter, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood." So we are justified by what Christ has done in the shedding of the blood.

Well Abraham, then, found the *raison d'être*, the unifying center, of life in midst of the civilization of his day, though an unbelieving and immoral civilization, in faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. There he found justification. There he found peace with God. There he found a meaningful existence in the society of God and men. It's the same principle upon which we may find justification, peace with God, and a meaningful existence today. It's that principle that should guide the saints of God today. And may it be our lamp too.

I'm sure that when Abraham went out some of the philosophers said, Quixotic. Some of the men of affairs of the day of Abraham said it's a wild goose chase. The prudent said, he'll come back sadder and wiser. But they learned that it was not so. This man who had the courage, given by the Holy Spirit, to believe the word of God, accept that promise, went out and came back, into all of the experiences of life, singing the same things that the children of Abraham may sing today. "One step I see before me, tis all I need to see, the light of heaven more brightly shines when earth's illusions flee, and sweetly through the silence comes his loving follow me, so on I go, not knowing, I would not if I might, I'd rather walk in the dark with God than go alone in the light. I'd rather walk by faith

in him than go alone by sight." That's the secret of Abraham's faith. It's the secret of the life that glorifies God. May God enable us to know something of it in experience.

If you're here this morning and you've never believed in him. We invite you to come to the God who justified Abraham and David and the apostles and the great saints of the centuries since. May God give you grace to join that happy throng that shall spend eternity giving glory to God because of his saving work. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and Heavenly Father, we are so thankful to Thee for these wonderful lessons from the lives of the great saints of the Bible. O Father, help us to learn those lessons. Deliver us from the failures that bring reproach to Thy name. Enable us, Lord, in some small measure, to glorify Thy name. We pray for the saints who are gathered here. Give them, Lord, motivation to the pondering of the Divine Revelation. Give them insight. Give them conviction. Give them enablement. And, O, may they glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. And for those who are here without him, O Father, at this very moment...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]