“Do I Believe God?”

March 4, 2018

John 8:28-39

Please find with me the 4th chapter of Romans.

Today’s word is faith; what it is and what can it do? I’m sure that there is one thing that matters in life; faith. I honestly don’t know what people do without the LORD. How do you begin and end your day? How do you carry out your daily responsibilities? And then, how do you manage when things go awry; when trouble comes?

What is it? The basic meaning is “belief.” For example in Ephesians 2:8 we read this *“For by grace are ye saved through faith…”*

And in Hebrews eleven we read this *“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”*

And what isn’t faith? “It’s not blind faith.” Rather, it’s an assurance. It’s a conviction that something is so. You exercise faith when it comes to things that you can’t see. Hebrews 11:3 *“Through faith we understand that the worlds [universe] were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”*

The only Person around when the universe came into existence was God. So, when we read that God created it, we believe it.

You all know that Janet and I passed through a very difficult time when our son died. Martha and Sylvia and the Goodwins (and maybe some of you) have passed through those same deep waters. And what a difference it made and still makes today that our family came to know that the LORD makes no mistakes and that we passed through those deep waters by faith.

You all also had some large challenges to overcome. Well, here’s a blessed passage on this same topic. I John 5:4 *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”*

So, today’s topic is faith. And I want you to see with me the golden example of the power of true faith. And we find it in a man named Abraham.

I’d like to begin with what some people think and say about the LORD. There are plenty of people around you and me who see God as Someone to either believe in or to not believe in. But the Bible doesn’t focus on that. Instead, both the OT and the NT present a much, more down home concern. And that is this. And I’ll phrase it in the form of a question, “Do you believe God?”

Can you see the difference? It’s not “Is there a God?” “Does God exist or do I believe in Him? Rather, it’s “Do I believe what He says?” So, from Romans four today I want to focus on the question “Do I believe God?” Shall we pray?

If you were to ask someone in your home or at school or at work this question “Is there a God?” you’d be asking a somewhat philosophical question and you’d, in essence, be looking for an intellectual debate. And, yes, there is a place for intellectual debate even on the matter of God’s existence. But the Bible lays out a much more practical approach. And, it’s not really an intellectual one as much as it is a moral one. Here’s the question that matters a whole lot more than “Does God exist?” “Do you believe what He says?”

When my wife and I were raising our children, we weren’t as concerned about whether they believed in God or not. Instead, we shared God’s Word with them. We taught them things from a Book that had changed and was changing us. We taught them things about *their* lives and *their* character and *their* attitudes. And why? Because parents aren’t normally intellectuals and philosophers. Parents are the ordinary class. We wanted our children to see and hear what God says. We also wanted them to know that we really believed the Bible.

Then, at a point in their lives, they came to (and here’s the key word) “trust” the LORD to save them. They came to have faith in Christ; and after that, be baptized, and learn to live by the Bible.

Folks, few of us are intellectuals. And, we’re not philosophers. Instead, we are (and, again, here’s the key word) Believers. So, what’s on my heart today is this. Do you believe God?

There are many things going on in your life right now; some good and some bad. But the question is the same. Do you believe God? Each of us have problems that other people don’t have. Each of us have things we need to do every day. And, likely, you don’t spend your day concerned about whether or not God exists. Seriously, that’s for philosophers.

And, yes, you might have a philosophy of life. But, no, you’re not a philosopher. Instead, you are a person created by the One, True, and Living God. And you are accountable to adjust your life according to what He says.

So, today, on the matter of faith and true faith, be prac-tical with me and let God’s Word be specific and personal. Answer for yourself the question “Do I believe God?”

When life hurts, ask the question. When problems appear, ask the question. When you’re driving your car, ask the question. When you’re eating and drinking, ask the question. When you’re sick, ask the question. When you sin, ask the question. When you fail, ask the question. When you succeed, ask the question.

You see, as you read your Bible and learn God’s ways, you discover that the LORD really isn’t interested in how good you are or how capable you are or how wealthy you are or how spiritual you or how great a pray-er you. Rather, He’s looking for faith.

Do you remember the story of Enoch in the Book of Genesis? Twice the Bible tells us that Enoch walked with God. Your life is either a “walk with God” or a “walk without God. Do you really think that the people who were living in Enoch’s day spent their day wondering “Is there a God?” No, the question then and the question now is the same. “Do I believe God?”

So, let’s take a look at a man who’s known the world over and who everyone, religious or non-religious, agrees, was a man of faith, Abraham. And Abraham, to this day remains an example of the importance of simple faith.

I took a look this week at the references to Abraham in the Bible. Here’s what I found. You all know he’s in Genesis. But did you know he’s referred to in Exodus, and Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and Joshua and first and second Kings, and first and second Chronicles and Nehemiah, and Psalms, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel and Micah and Matthew and Mark and Luke and John and Acts and Romans and Corinthians and Galatians and Hebrews and James and Peter?

The other thing I noticed is that most of the time, Abraham is spoken of in relation to the Jews. And he’s given this designation. He’s called Father Abraham.

You see, all Jews throughout the centuries teach and believe Abraham to be their father. Even the LORD says this to the Jews *“Look unto Abraham, your father …”* (Isaiah 51:2). I even found the account of someone who died and in Hell could see Father Abraham afar off in Heaven. So, even in the afterlife Abraham has a venerable, a high position.

So, yes, Abraham is an important character in the history of the world. But, now we come to Romans 4. And the question becomes this. “Did Abraham believe God?”

Let me show you what I mean. Look at Romans 4:1 *“What shall we say then that* ***Abraham our father****, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? (2) For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. (3) For what saith the scripture?* ***Abraham believed God****, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”*

Through Jewish eyes, you’ll see this throughout the whole Bible and on into our modern world; Jews see Abraham as their Father. And rightly so. Why? Because he’s the progen-itor of the Jewish people. But what do we find in the Bible regarding Abraham? It’s this. Did Abraham believe God?

Yes, Abraham believed God. And let me add Galatians 3:6 *“Even as* ***Abraham believed God****, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”*

And here’s James 2:23 *“And the scripture was fulfilled which saith,* ***Abraham believed God****, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.”*

Now, imagine, for just a moment if, after having traced your ancestry on Ancestry.com that you discovered that you were a direct descendant from George Washington or, let’s say, Abraham Lincoln or Queen Elizabeth I. Wouldn’t that be an honor?

I will tell you today on the basis of the greatest authority I know, the Scriptures, that you who believe God are directly related to Father Abraham. You are a descendant of this greatest of men, the man who God called His friend, Abraham. Isaiah 41:8 *“But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of* ***Abraham my friend****.”*

Now, look with me please at Romans 4, verse 8. Romans 4:8 *“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. (9) Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision [Jew] only, or upon the uncircumcision [Gentile] also? For we say that faith was reckoned [imputed] to Abraham for righteousness.”*

Do you recall the teaching that says that the only kind of righteousness available to you and me is “imputed righteous-ness?” Well, this word “reckoned” is exactly the same word as “imputed.”

*(10) How was it [righteousness] then reckoned [imputed]? When he [Abraham] was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? [Paul’s answer] Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. (11) And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe,*

*though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed [reckoned] unto them also: (12) And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.”*

Now here’s where the Bible teaches us that all Believers are counted as descendants of Abraham. And, what sort of descendants are we? Look again at verse eleven. Romans 4:11*“And he [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised:* ***that he might be the father of all them that believe****, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed [reckoned] unto them also: …”*

We are the spiritual sons and daughters of Abraham.

Paul says the very same thing to the Galatians. Galatians 3:29 *“And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

Anyone and everyone who comes to Christ and receives His free offer of salvation belongs to Him. But, says Paul, if you are Christ’s, then you are also Abraham’s seed. Whoever belongs to Christ is also a spiritual descendant of Abraham.

Now, why is that so important? Here’s why. It’s absolutely true that the Jews descended from Father Abraham. But, to this very day, the Jews believe they are part of the Abrahamic Covenant. And they show this every time a baby boy is born into a Jewish home. How? They practice the rite of circumcision. Today it’s call a Bris.

Now, I’m sure you’ve wondered why in the world Paul makes the matter of circumcision so important that he insists on explaining that Abraham exercised faith before the sign of circumcision.

Well, here’s why. Circumcision was God’s idea; for two reasons. One, to distinguish the Jews from the Gentiles. And two, to symbolize who was part of the Covenant He had made with all the descendants of Abraham.

Historically, when a Jew circumcised his newborn baby boy, he was saying, in essence, this child is part of, not only my family, but the Covenant Family, the Jewish community.

Even to this very day, the Jews still practice this. They hold a special “circumcision service,” called a Brit (pronounced Bree) Malah, which means “Covenant of circumcision” obviously applied to every male Jewish baby on the eighth day of his life.

But what is the truth about it? The sign of circumcision given by God to Abraham was a seal of the righteousness of his *faith*; in particular, says Paul, the *faith* he had prior to the institution the sign of circumcision.

Romans 4:11*“And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be* ***the father of all them that believe****, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed [reckoned] unto them also: …”*

You see, God will always bring you back to this question, “Do you believe Him?” The question for many Jews today is not “Do I believe in circumcision?” Instead, it’s question of believing God because when you believe God, as the Scriptures say, you gain the righteousness of God Himself.

Abraham is definitely the father of the Jews; physically. But he is also just as certainly the Father of all those who believe; spiritually.

So, where are you on this matter of faith? Yes, Jew or Gentile, you might believe *in* God. But folks, even the demons believe *in* God. And they tremble. James 2:19 *“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”*

The demons even believe there is one God. And you may be right there along with all the demons if you say you believe there is one God.

Earlier I defined faith for you. But, really, to have faith, you need to exercise faith in something or in someone. So, what is it? Faith, as an action verb is *“unreserved surrender to whatever the LORD says.”* It means you believe God. Regardless of what you or I or anyone else thinks, if God says it, I surrender. In other words, I accept what He says as truth; period. And, like Father Abraham, at the moment you believe God, He imputes His own righteousness onto your account.

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So, will you agree with me that Abraham is a high-ranking character in the Bible? And will you agree with me that Abraham had God’s own righteousness imputed to him by faith? And will you then agree with me that the only way to find a right relationship to God is to believe Him?

So, what’s the most important question in life? Last month I was in a business here in town and said to the person next to me *“What do you think is the most important question in life?”*

At first, he hesitated. Then he said *“I’ll have to think about that.”* And a few minutes later he says “I know what the most important question in life is. It’s *“What can I do for you?”*

Very good answer, wouldn’t you say? Well, there really is a more important question then that one. Here it is. “Do I believe God?”

You see, this is Paul’s message. This is Paul’s sermon. This is the reason he uses Abraham as his illustration. Apart from faith in what God says, you are lost. No salvation, no righteousness, no Heaven.

So, Father Abraham stands in history as a “faith giant.” And you who believe on Jesus Christ are one of his heirs. You too, like Abraham of old, have been given God’s righteousness.

So, what can we learn from Romans four and from the Father Abraham? Why would the Holy Spirit have Paul write these words to the Romans? Why is believing so critical? Here’s why.

One, because faith is the one thing that pleases God.

There is not one good work and there are not one million good works that will so please God that He will grant you forgiveness or heaven or His righteousness. Rather, you show Him your highest honor and respect by believing Him.

The one aspect of your life that pleases God is your faith. Faith is trust. Faith is confidence. Faith is even self-distrust. It’s a firm conviction that something is true. Hebrews 11:6 *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: …”*

Impossible. It’s not feasible. It’s not able to occur. It’s in no way possible for a person to please God if he lacks faith.

Paul “…does not say it is difficult, or so necessary that without it success is barely possible. He declares it to be “impossible.” When the Holy Spirit says that a thing is impossible, it is so in a very absolute sense. Let us not attempt the impossible. To attempt a difficulty may be laudable,

but to rush upon the impossible is madness! We must not, therefore, hope to please God by any invention of our own, however clever, nor by any labor of our own, however ardent—since infallible inspiration declares that, *“without faith it is impossible to please God.”* (C. H. Spurgeon)

So, why would the Holy Spirit have the Apostle Paul put such a huge emphasis on the matter of faith?

One, because faith is the one thing that pleases God.

And two, because to believe God is to believe what He says.

Folks, God wrote a book. He put into that Book all you need to know about life and godliness. He’s given you His Word. It’s true cover to cover. It’s alive. It’s sharp. It’s pointed. It pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit. It’s powerful. It’s a discerner of the thoughts and intents of your heart. It’s holy. It’s good. It’s life-giving. And there’s just one book that God wrote. You hold it in your hand. It’s infallible. It’s inspired. It’s the Word of His Spirit. It came directly from His heart. And it’s a Book that speaks directly to *your* heart.

Faith is true faith if it’s faith in what the LORD says.

Here’s Paul again to the Romans. Romans 10:17 *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*

Evangelist Dwight L. Moody said, *“I prayed for faith and it did not come, but when I read the Word of God then faith came.”*

The only way you know for sure that you believe God is to say I believe this Book. It’s your lifeline to God.

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Two, because to believe God is to believe what He says.

And three, because good works flow from a believing heart.

When you exercise faith, you choose to lean on the Person and power of the LORD Jesus Christ. And as and when you do that, you then practice and produce good works.

Jesus explained it this way to the Pharisees one day. John 8:39 *“They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, if ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.”*

It was easy for the Jews to think they were special because they were descended from Abraham. But Jesus makes it very plain that, first, they had to become a child of Abraham by faith. Then, they would be able to do good works.

Paul puts it this way. Ephesians 2:8 *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast. (10)* ***For we are*** *his workmanship,* ***created in Christ Jesus unto good works****, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”*

The Bible tells us that faith without works is dead. James 2:17 *“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”*

The Christian’s life is a life of service, of good works, of obedience, of applying the eternal principles given in God’s Word. And where is it the power comes from to do good deeds? It comes from the One Who lives in you. It comes from the Source of power, the LORD Jesus Himself. Paul says it like this. I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.

You see, if you have your confidence in the Right Person, then you will show that faith by a life of good works.

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I recently read the following story about Niccolo Paganini, the great Italian violinist. He owned a Stradivarius violin, one of the greatest instruments ever designed and made. One day he gave a concert. In the days leading up to the concert, the focus of the press was on that Stradivarius violin and not on Paganini. So, when he came out onto the stage, he held up the violin and proceeded to cut two of the strings, then played the concert on the two strings that were left. At the end of the concert he said to the audience, *“It is not the violin. It is Paganini who makes the music.”*

The LORD Himself lives in you. And, because He lives, because He lives in you, the works that you do are really the expression of the life and power of Christ living in you.

So, my concluding question to you is this, “Do you believe God?” When you do, your life will be pleasing to the LORD. You will discover that believing Him means you believe what He says in His Word. And good works will flow from your believing heart.

So, do you believe Him?

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 527 “I Know Whom I Have Believed”