

“Faith”

“And [Abram] believed the Lord, and He counted it to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6).

Abram is a wealthy man from Ur in the Chaldeans – and God calls him to wander like a man without a home, without a country. All he had was a Word of the Lord – a promise – of land, of descendants, of blessing. He had no proof, no evidence – only the Word. He had no children – he and his wife are old, as good as dead – and now he’s prepared to give his inheritance to his servant, Eliezer.

The Word of the Lord came to Abram: “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them ... So shall your offspring be.” Look at all those stars – that’s how many descendants you will have Abram – the Lord promises.

Faith, “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Heb. 11:1). The promise brings forth faith – a trust in the Word the Lord has spoken – the promise as good as done. The Lord declares Abram to be righteous – not because of what he has done – but righteous by faith.

Faith is being certain of something you can’t yet see. The person who says – “I’ll believe it WHEN I see it” – is not speaking from faith. If you can see it, you don’t have to believe it. The person who says – “I don’t believe anything I can’t see with my own eyes” – doesn’t believe anything at all.

We operate by trust all the time. We jump in the car with Dad or Mom without checking the itinerary. We board an airplane without going through the pre-flight checklist. We swallow pills, trusting that the doctor has made the correct diagnosis and the pharmacist has filled the correct prescription.

Christian faith is trust that you have something for no other reason than God says you do. It all depends upon God and His Word, His promise. A mother says her child can get a candy bar at the store – and when it's time to checkout, the child already has the candy bar picked out and reminds mom that “she promised.” He trusts her promise. Likewise, faith says, “Lord, remember what you promised.”

We're not born with that faith. Ever since Adam and Eve determined that they could manage things better than God – we, and all their descendants – don't trust God, we trust ourselves. We SAY that we trust God – but all it takes is for something to go wrong, and we're wondering – “Why does God let this happen?”

Faith is trust in God – taking Him at His Word. By His Word, God created all things. You can't prove that scientifically. Science will never be able to tell us what happened “in the beginning” – or how it happened – because you can't measure God.

And yet, the Christian confesses this to be true – by faith alone. God spoke, and it happened. The whole universe owes its existence to God. That's how it works with God – His Word does what it says – and it says what He does.

Faith is more than knowledge – it is a living and active trust in God. Trusting God and His promise – Abram left his comfortable way of life and went to live as a nomad, a stranger, an alien in a foreign land. Even when he was homeless, Abram believed he had a home with God.

The power of faith is not FAITH itself – but the object of faith. Your trust in the airplane and its pilot doesn't keep you in the air – it just puts you on the plane. Your trust that the battery in your car is good doesn't start the car – it just turns the key.

Abraham and Sarah conceived a son well into their senior years – and it wasn't the strength of Abram's believing that did it. It was God who created that life – according to His Word – by His promise.

Faith brings with it patience. Abram wandered, and waited for the fulfillment of the promise. The Book of Hebrews talks about all the Old Testament believers who wandered and waited and watched for the promises of God to come true – and they died, never seeing with their own eyes, what God had promised.

They only caught glimpses of what was coming – and yet, they died in faith. They died, trusting the Word, the promises of God – and God counted it to them as righteousness – just as He did with Abram. They trusted there was something greater yet to come – a city and a country – a home prepared by God – and they were willing to wait, even to suffer, to see it.

So it is with you. You don't see all that God has promised. You don't see the redemption of your body – you see it breaking down. You don't see yourself as a saint, a holy one – you see your sin and weaknesses, how you try to play God.

You see death all around – and yet, God calls you to believe that your sins are forgiven – and that even though you die, yet shall you live. Your suffering will be vindicated. Your body will be resurrected to life again – all because of the object of your faith – Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whose Good Friday death has secured your freedom, your forgiveness, your everlasting life.

Jesus says, "It is finished" – and it is so. Your faith doesn't accomplish this victory – it doesn't add anything to it – it receives all that Jesus has done for you, and promises to you.

Today, as you receive His Absolution, His resurrected Body and Blood – faith says "amen" – your righteousness, your resurrection and life without end, is certain and sure. All this I have done "for you" Jesus promises. And you believe the Lord and His promises – and He counts such faith, as righteousness. You, dearly beloved, are righteous in God's sight – through faith in Jesus Christ. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.