



Sermon, Sunday March 5, 2023 “Abraham’s Faith”

SCRIPTURE: Romans 4:1-17 ¹What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? ²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” ⁴Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. ⁵But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. ⁶So also David speaks of the blessedness of those to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works: ⁷“Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; ⁸blessed is the one against whom the Lord will not reckon sin.” ⁹Is this blessedness, then, pronounced only on the circumcised, or also on the uncircumcised? We say, “Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.” ¹⁰How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, ¹²and likewise the ancestor of the circumcised who are not only circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith that our ancestor Abraham had before he was circumcised. ¹³For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. ¹⁶For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”)—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

Introduction: Abraham, Father of Faith

Today is the second Sunday of Lent. We hope that we will be able to deeply reflect on our faith during the season of Lent. In the Old Testament, there are three characters that Jews consider the most important. The first is David, who established the unified dynasty of Israel. The second is Moses who led the Israelites out of Egypt and received the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai. Third is Abraham who was the first to receive God's covenant. The idea of the chosen people of the Jews begins with Abraham.

According to the Old Testament book of Genesis, God promised Abraham that He would make him the father of a nation, that his descendants would be numerous, and that kings would come from among his descendants. He also promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants.

In fact, Abraham was from Ur of the Chaldeans, the birthplace of the Mesopotamian civilization. Ur of the Chaldeans is now part of Iraq. God commands Abraham to leave the place where he lived and go to the land of Canaan. It was not an easy decision, but at the age of 75, Abraham left Haran for Canaan with his wife Sarai and nephew Lot. Later, Abraham was called the father of faith.



The Apostle Paul speaks of Abraham in today's text. There is a reason why the Apostle Paul deals with the story of Abraham. At that time, Paul was in conflict with the Jews because they thought that the law came from the authority of Moses, so all Jews had to keep the law. This thought was not different from the Jews who became Christians. Jewish Christians accepted the fact that Jesus was the Son of God and were saved by believing in his crucifixion and resurrection, but at the same time they thought they had to practice the Jewish law. The Apostle Paul did not accept this idea of the Jews and of the Jewish Christians. He thought that after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, works of the law could no longer be an absolute condition for salvation.

By the way, the problem of faith and the law that the Apostle Paul faced remains with us. We must live by faith, not by law. The Lord completed the law through the cross and resurrection and showed us the way to live by faith. Then, what is the Apostle Paul trying to tell us through Abraham's faith?

Body: Faith and the law

The Apostle Paul says that the basis for Abraham's justification by God was not the law, but his faith. **Apostle Paul speaks through Romans 4:3, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."**

This verse speaks of the fact that Abraham, an absolute being to the Jews, received God's calling and promise through faith, not through the practice of the law. **Further, the Apostle Paul says in Romans 4:13, "For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith."**

In this verse, God promised Abraham and his descendants that they could live as God's people, but that promise is not fulfilled by keeping the law, but only through faith.

Furthermore, the Apostle Paul says in verse 15 of the text; **"For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation."** The Jews would not have agreed with Apostle Paul's claims, because the law was an absolute standard that Jews had to keep. In general, we think that there must be laws to maintain order in a chaotic world. The law is a social norm that makes individuals and communities work well together. But the Apostle Paul says that this kind of law brings the wrath of God.

The Apostle Paul goes further and says, **"Where there is no law, neither is there violation."** In other words, our guilt is caused by the law. To put it simply, it is because we cannot keep all the laws 100%. And the consciousness of sin within us is the wrath of God. That's why the Apostle Paul says that the law brings the wrath of God.

By the way, I hope you do not misunderstand the words of the Apostle Paul. He is not saying that the law is the problem. Nor does it say that there should be no law. Furthermore, He is not saying that we should not keep the law. The Apostle Paul is pointing out that the thoughts of those who absolutize the law and circumcision, which shows keeping the law, are wrong. The law has limits in leading human life perfectly. Therefore, the moment the law is made absolute, human life is destroyed. In simple terms, no matter how good the law is, if there are people who misuse it, it destroys people's lives.

So the Apostle Paul tells us the example of Abraham. In Abraham's time, there was no Mosaic law. Nevertheless, Abraham received the covenant to become God's chosen people. What Abraham needed in the process of receiving the covenant was not law but 'only faith'.

There are many stories in the Old Testament, Genesis, that show Abraham's faith. It was because of faith that Abraham left his hometown where he lived a stable life and went to Canaan, which God commanded. Also, Abraham believed God's promise to give him as many descendants as the stars in the sky, even when he could not have a son with his wife Sarah. In this way, Abraham fully believed in and followed God.



But the problem is that it is difficult to live by faith in our lives. In contrast to this, living by the law is considered rather easy and realistic.

In our lives, the law even motivates us to some extent because we can be rewarded for our achievements. Let me give you one easy example. In school, teachers distinguish between when students do well and when they do not, by using reward and punishment. Students work voluntarily or are forced to win awards. The way the world moves is very similar to this. We are rewarded if we adhere to the norms set by the world, and we are penalized if we do not. We are very used to this order of life.

However, unlike this, living by faith is not based on reward and punishment, but through a relationship of pure trust. By the way, is it possible to form such a relationship of trust in the world we live in? Perhaps, sometimes it is possible but sometimes it is not. The formation of a relationship of trust will depend on how trustworthy we are in a relationship.

Therefore, it is important for us to know who God is and to believe in and trust in Him and live. We must have the conviction that God is the only one to whom we can entrust everything. If we do not have such confidence, we have no choice but to live a legal life again. By the way, the apostle Paul confesses about God in **Romans 4:17** as follows. **“He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed--the God who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.”** (NIV)

In this verse, Apostle Paul says that the God of Abraham is the God of resurrection and the God of creation. There is only one thing the God of resurrection and creation requires of us. It is to have faith in God the Creator and trust in God's ability to raise the dead. The Lord doesn't ask much of us. The Lord does not require of us that we be saved. He just wants us to believe and trust the Lord of creation and resurrection. This is faith.

Conclusion: God's Covenant Obtained Through Faith

Now let's summarize today's message. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

Whether in the days of the Apostle Paul or today, we still must live in a world that requires a legalistic way of life. The reason why people don't get out of the legal way of life is because living a legal life is much more familiar and comfortable. In that sense, the path to live by faith is a narrow path. The Lord, the object of our faith, has the power of resurrection and creation. When we trust Him completely, we experience true peace and rest. We will also enjoy the blessing of eternal life. **John 3:16** says: **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”**

I hope that our lives will stay in the fullness of the grace that the Lord gives us every day through faith.

