

"Faith in a Flawless God" Romans 4:9–25

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[0 : 00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer. Father, gosh, your Word is hard to understand sometimes, and Father, we often don't want to just acknowledge before you that that's the case, but it is. We have trouble sometimes, Father. And so we ask that your Holy Spirit would lead us and guide us into all truth, that your Holy Spirit would draw us into your presence, that we might know Jesus and what He did for us on the cross, that we might know Him ever more deeply as our Savior and as our Lord, and that we might live, Father, out of that knowledge. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Please be seated. So I have several hats. I'm the rector or the senior pastor of this church. I'm also, a year and a half ago, the bishop of the diocese, like our movement in Canada, asked me if I would take over the lead role to try to mobilize and initiate more church planting across the country. So I've been in that role for a year and a half, trying to get something going. But anyway, once a year, there's people like me scattered around the states, and they bring us all together for a couple of days for prayer, for discussion, community building, networking, all of that type of stuff. And this year, they decided to have it in Tucson, Arizona, at a redemptorist retreat center on the edge of a very large national park in the Sonora Desert. Sonoma? Sonora? I can't remember which one of those two names for it. Desert. It's very hard to get to Tucson from Ottawa. Not a very easy flight. Anyway, on my way there on Tuesday, and on my way back on Friday, I had the trips from hell.

[3 : 03] Or maybe just a very, very bad case of purgatory. I almost said something about a particular airport, which I probably shouldn't say. I might get sued for slander or something. I'll just say this. I spent two and three quarter, I got up at four o'clock in the morning to catch a flight. Two and three quarter hours, the flight was delayed. Most of that is spent sitting on a plane on the runway, always being told we had another 15 minutes. Then we make it to the O'Hare airport. I of course missed my flight. I now have, I am not making this up, an eight-hour layover in Chicago's O'Hare airport.

And let me guarantee you, being in the O'Hare airport in Chicago is far more like hell than it is like heaven. And then, even when we're leaving, the flight's delayed another hour. So rather than getting to Tucson at 11.15 on Tuesday afternoon, I pull in at 11.30 at night, 2.30 in my body's time, and that's when I finally arrive in Tucson. Coming back, I think it can't be worse. Well, it wasn't worse.

But, delayed in Denver, missed my transfer in Toronto, in Ottawa, and rather than getting home at 9.15 on Friday evening, I pull into my house 2.30 in the morning because of delays to flights.

As I said, more like hell than it is like heaven. But in the middle, I had a series of remarkable experiences. I mean, obviously there's work and all of that type of stuff, but the retreat center was on the edge of the desert. And it wasn't perfectly still. There was a road that was clear and nearby.

But the first morning when I woke up, I woke up early because even though I'm jet lagged, it's still, I'm still on Ottawa time, not the three-hour time difference in Tucson. And I have to have a cup of coffee when I wake up. And I go in, I get my cup of coffee, no breakfast for a while, but I have a cashy bar and a protein bar. And I sit, I stand and drink my coffee and eat those two bars. And it's silent and it's still. And you look over a plane and there's mountains all around you. And it was just glorious. You can see the mountains in the east in shadow. You can see the mountains in the west with the sun fully shining on them. And there's several times while I was there, there was another time I was talking to my wife. We had a bit of a team building exercise by going for a two and three-quarter hour hike in the desert. And I come back from that and I'm having a coffee and I'm in the shade and it's beautiful temperature. And I'm looking out over the mountains. I'm talking to my wife.

[5 : 58] And there's another time I had just before I'm coming back. And I've just had a really, really nice meal. And the temperature's perfect. And the sky is blue. And there's mountains all around.

And you just have one of those transcendent types of moments. Like maybe some of you have had it maybe going canoeing. Maybe it's around a fire. Maybe it's a good meal with really, really good friends. And you just have this sense of that things are right.

It's like you're taken out of yourself, but you're still yourself. And there's beauty. And it's just so good. And you have a longing and a yearning that there would be more of this. And yet at the same time, you know that what you're, like, even the desire to know that there must be something more is in and of itself a type of pleasure. It's you're experiencing, I'm experiencing a type of yearning for, well, in our secular world, we don't know what to say. And in fact, one of the things about the secular world is what is really real in our secular world. My experience after having a really, really wonderful meal in the desert, surrounded by the mountains with beautiful temperature and beautiful sky and just really feeling at peace and at home with the universe, is that the most real?

Or is the O'Hare airport the most real? And you know, from outside the Christian faith, there's no way to even try to figure that out.

But one of the things which is so wonderful is that the Bible, in just one little word, it introduces a brand new category. And for us as Christians, we understand that that moment, I mean, on one level, of course, the O'Hare experience of breaking down and not things working, and nobody takes any type of responsibility for it, or offers to help you. Customer service sucks. Like, all of that part of that experience, right? That's obviously real.

[8 : 07] But for Christians, we understand that those senses, that type of longing or yearning for something more, and as I said, it could be in different ways. Maybe, you know, I've also had that in a little bit in a small way, singing in a certain type of context. I can well imagine that athletes have it when things are just working perfectly. Maybe creatives get it too when the dance just works perfectly, or the recital just works perfectly, and there's just something fitting and right.

And you have a sense that it opens up into something transcendent and big and real, and that is in the background, the foreground in just one word, but in the background of what all this text is trying to get at. And all I'll be able to do is just not, this isn't a, like a commentary exercise where I'll try to explain every phrase, but just to try to get that aspect of the argument as it flows through the text. So if you're with me, the Bible says something very profound about this, and very hopeful. So if you take your Bibles, actually, I forgot to ask Claire, we're going to begin at verse 7 of Romans chapter 4. If you have your own Bibles, please follow along.

And this is how it goes in Romans chapter 4, verse 7, and then we'll get to what Owen just read. And he's quoting from Psalm 32, and he says, Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man or woman against whom the Lord will not count his sin. And this is this idea that, you know, if you think about it for a second, you can't have that experience. If there is, in fact, a blessedness, and there is something more, I can't be in that if I am the same person with my sin and selfishness and the bad things I do. Something has to take that away for me to fully enter into whatever that big reality is that's transcendent and just big and beautiful. And when you're in it, you have a sense that I was made for this. I was designed and created for this. And if that is to be at all my experience, then this whole notion, which is bringing to a close what we looked at last week, this idea that somehow or another that the wrong things you've done are all been forgiven. When it says the sins are covered, it doesn't mean that they're covered up. It's like if you go out to a really, really nice bill and then a meal in it, and then you see to your horror how much money you've spent, and somebody says, I'll cover that. That's the meaning

there. I'll cover that. I got it covered. And then once again, this whole idea of the God's not even going to count them against us. There's something else which is going on. And then it goes here in verse 9, and here's where the translation isn't very accurate.

You get a sort of a hint at it, but it's missing something more foundational. In verse 9, it said, is this, not blessing, is this blessedness? Is this blessedness? Then only for the circumcised or also for the uncircumcised? I'll just read it, and then I'll go back. Why on earth does he go from blessedness to circumcised? Like, what? If you're wondering that, that's good. You know, if you don't have honest intellectual reactions and emotional reactions to the text, you'll never grow. Like, go ahead and say, what? You go from blessedness to circumcision? Like, who in their right mind would go like that? Go ahead and say that. But then let's pause with the text and see that actually, Paul, the scriptures are in their most profoundly right mind because it's talking about something profoundly human that makes us miss what God desires to give us. So I'll just read it. So is this blessedness only for the circumcised or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that the faith was, that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. I'll explain this in a moment. How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he was circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. And the word righteousness there, I'll talk about it more in a moment. It means right with God. Just think of right with God. Not that you're perfect, but that you're right with God. Then it continues, the purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that being right with God would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised, who are not merely circumcised, but also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. Okay, this is all pretty crazy. So why on earth is he talking about circumcision? So on one hand, here I have to bridge two worlds. On one hand, of course, there's this whole biblical argument that's going on, and one of my big points, one of the big points of this text is that the heart of faith is believing, taking God at his word.

[13:08] You take God at his word and you believe what he said. That's what faith is. That growing into faith is just taking him at his word. So on one hand, we're going to take him at his word and look at this, but he's also talking about a human problem that Christians share. You know why Christians share human problems? Because we're humans. That's sort of a little bit of a no-brainer, right? We don't change our species when we give our lives to Christ. And so here, what is the problem with it? The problem is that people will choose appearances over reality. They'll choose image management over actually being real. We choose the surface rather than authentic and substance. It's a constant problem. It's a problem for Jewish people, for Christians, and for every single person who's trying to manage their image rather than actually be something. And on one hand, we all know that we would rather be authentic and be than merely appear. A lot of our interpersonal problems is because we're so worried about image management that we can't and we don't trust the reality of who we are. We know that the reality, we're embarrassed and ashamed about the reality of who we are, so we keep things at an arm's distance and we're terrified and worried that people will pierce through that and we'll discover that, well, we're not as good as we talked as if we were, that we're not as whole or holy, that there's things shameful and bad and evil about us that we don't want people to touch. And so there's this profound human tendency. And so what's going on here is that Paul goes through a biblical argument to show that God makes a promise to Abraham and that he will provide this offspring that will be life for the whole world and a blessing for the whole world. And when Abraham believes God and believes what God said,

God brings him into blessedness, a right relationship with him. And circumcision is used rather than the word Jewish because that's something external to show that what Abraham has already got by faith.

And that's why he uses the word circumcision and all of the things around it. Because you see, it becomes very easy for the Jewish people to focus on those external things and not actually say why the external things are there. It's as if, you know, I want to go to Tucson, I want to get back to the retreat center, and there's a sign saying the retreat center is that way, and I stop at the sign rather than actually going to the retreat center. Like, don't stop at the sign. You go to where the sign is pointing. Like, what is the sign promising? That's where you go. That's where the reality is. That's where the substance and the authenticity is. And so, you know, just for people outside the Christian faith and within, that's why, you know, most people spend more time trying to make themselves

look good in the morning than actually working on their attitudes and their thought life and their plans and actually being good. Right? Sorry, that's maybe too pointed, but that's true. It can happen with

Christians, you know? You're more concerned with being in the right type of church that's either completely not hip and progressive or just sufficiently hip or progressive or that has the right type of walk and the right type of lingo. And, you know, they look at me and say, George, you're the world's worst Christian. Look at that. This is a tiny, wimpy, little brown leather Bible. Like, real Christians have big, black, floppy Bibles that open up and walk in a particular way. And we all have it.

And so, Paul is saying here in the Bible, there is this possibility of blessedness. And blessedness is something that only the triune God can bring you into. Only the triune God can bring you into blessedness. And blessedness is what this longing and yearning is for. Because, you see, when we have a longing and yearning for the, when we have those times, you know, where the dance is just perfect, the music is perfect, the acting is perfect, the math is perfect, the fire is good, the canoe is good, the meal is good, whatever it is. And we enter into something that we realize is bigger than us and we touch us. And we know that on one hand, it's more than us, yet it's somehow another inside of us. And we hope and long that it's not that we have this sense that we're touching something transcendent and eternal and good and beautiful and true, yet also something deeply personal. We have this sense of it. And Paul is going to say time and time and time again, if such a world exists, only God can bring you into it.

[18 : 21] The idea that you can somehow manufacture and make that all on your own by your own actions, the more you think about it, the more ridiculous you realize that is, the more laughable you think it is. Only God can bring you into that. You see, the word right with God might make us feel a certain type of way, but at the end of the day, it would be a little bit like me saying, I'm right with the Air Canada agent who really tried very hard when I was in Toronto to get me on an earlier flight.

And there was nothing she could do because all the flights were full, except this last one that was supposed to leave at 12.30 after midnight, but didn't leave until after one, because once again, that was my day. And I could say I'm right with her, but I don't even know her name. I don't really care about her. And that's how most people might think about God. And that's why Paul introduces this other concept, to say that in a sense, to be right with God, to be truly right with God, is to be in blessedness. And you cannot be in blessedness without being right with God. And so Paul is saying that when you only, if you understand that only God, only the triune God can bring you into blessedness, then the question is, why do you and I time and time and time and time again choose image management over reality, lies over truth, appearance over substance, external over depth, the inauthentic over the authentic? Why do we stop at that? Why is that such a human problem? And when we realize that that's such a human problem, that emphasizes even more that only God can bring you in to that which our yearnings and longings point to, which is a blessedness in the triune life of God that is transcendent and imminent and eternal and good and beautiful and true. The next bit, once again, I'm not going to be talking about everything in the text. I'm going to try to trace this argument through it. Like, why...

This next bit tries to get at the fact that we don't want to just trust that only God can do it.

There's still something within us that crazily thinks that even though we are so prone to image management rather than reality and all of those problems, that somehow we can still get to that by ourselves. So Paul looks at that in the next few verses. Look at verse 13.

[20 : 59] For the promise... Now here's... That's going to be the key word here. The promise. It's a promise from God. For the promise to Abraham and his offspring, that's ultimately referring to Jesus, that he would be heir of the world, did not come through the law, that is doing religious good deeds or religious rituals or your moral performance, but through the righteousness of faith, through having faith in Christ and in God that makes you right with him. And if you're right with him truly, you're in blessedness, and if you're in blessedness, you are right with God. For is... If it is the adherence of the law that is doing the right things and the right rituals and the right religion, who are to be heirs, then that means that faith... And here the word null and promised is void. It's actually a verb in the original language. It means it's nullified. Every time you turn away from just trusting in God, that only God can bring you into blessedness, and that it all depends on him promising to do it, every time you turn away from that, you're completely and utterly moving away from faith and moving away from promise. You're saying those things are irrelevant. And then when it says, for the law brings wrath, but where there is no law, there is no transgression, I'm not going to talk about

that. You can ask me about it at a coffee hour, because it will take five minutes to try to explain, and this is already going to be a pretty big sermon.

What's going on here is this. And this, you see, and the reason we begin with the Bible, but also bring it back to human experience, is because Christians are human beings, and so we have this inbuilt tendency to misread and mishear what God actually says to us. And so we have this tendency of reading the Bible as if it says, obey the law, and I will bless you. Be good, and I will bless you. Do the right rituals, and I will bless you.

Learn mindfulness, and I will bless you. Learn how to pray like Allah tells you, and I will bless you. Learn to meditate, and I will bless you. Learn yoga, and I will bless you. Become beautiful, and I will bless you.

All of these different versions, and that's the normal way, and Christians often slide into reading the Bible in this way, but what God actually says here is this to Abraham. I will bless you.

Believe my promise. Whoa, that's so different. I will bless you. Only I can bring you into blessedness. I want to bring you into blessedness. I have provided the way to bring you into blessedness.

[23 : 35] Believe my word. Believe my promise. Believe my guarantee. It begins with, I will bless you. I will bring you into blessedness. That's how it begins. Believe my promise. And if you go the other way, I'm not going to believe your promise, God. I'm not going to believe you're the one who can bring me into this. No, no. I'm going to work at image management. I'm going to work at the right type of rituals, and I'm going to do all those things, because then you have to bless me. The way you do that, all you're doing is walking away from what God desires to give you.

So why about all this talk about faith and belief? And then is it like trying to say that there's some type of superpower? And is it just believing the right couple of words or having the right type of experience? Well, let's look at verses 16 to 19. That is why it depends on faith. That is this being in blessedness, being right with God. That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring. You see, when you are made right with God and enter into blessedness, one of the images that is used is that it is as if I become God's child by adoption and grace.

I mean, one of the great truths, one of the takeaways from this sermon for us is that you can face any situation you're in, both maybe a job interview or some other type of thing or a performance, or you can look at any type of thing in your life, and you can know that because you put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, that he is God's provision for you to be brought into blessedness by him, that you know that you can pray to your Father in heaven who is almighty God, and you are his precious child.

with all your words, with all your problems, with all your shame, with all your weakness, with all your doubts. I have all of those things. And part of the reason I so desperately need you and I desperately need times of worship is to be reminded once again with all of you that I have a Father in heaven who loves me, who is the God of the entire earth, and he is the almighty, everlasting, eternal God, and he has made me his beloved child by adoption and grace.

I could not accomplish that. If you knew what I was really like, I could never make that happen. And if you think you can make it happen for yourself, you are deluding yourself.

[26 : 39] You are deluding yourself. You see, faith is losing delusions about yourself to take God at his word and believe his promises and guarantees.

I hope you want to leave your delusions behind and take God at his word. I'll continue reading. Search 16 again. 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, who is the father of us all.

It is written, I have made you the father of many people groups. 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, in hope he believed against hope, in other words, against all appearances, against all optimism, against all types of self-confidence, against all of his self-assessments, if he's an optimist against all of his optimism, if he's a pessimist against all of his pessimism, if he's arrogant against all of his arrogance, if he suffers from the world's worst self-identity and feels completely ashamed against all shame, in hope against all of those other things he believed, that he should become the father of many nations, even though, as he had been told, so shall your offspring be.

He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead, since he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

[28 : 19] You see, here's the other thing about faith, is faith is never against reason, but it's often against our feelings and appearances. Faith is always against our delusions, but it's never against being thoughtful and reflective and thinking.

And the image, so you see, in a sense, to be, you know, faith is taking God at his word and believing him and his promise. Faith is taking God at his word and believing in him and his promise. And so, in a sense, we have to put to death our own optimism, our own pessimism, our own self-trust, and all of those types of things. And it's not that we don't look at the world.

Blessedness, why do we still look at the world? Because at the end of the day, we believe there is a God who does exist, who's created all things out of nothing, that is the author and the giver of all life, who has raised Jesus from the dead, which we're going to get to in a moment, and that's the real world.

That's the real God. Scientists have never been able to show how inorganic, lifeless matter can create life.

[29 : 39] What is more reasonable, to think that a whole pile of chemicals under a rock gives life, or that God gives life? What story is more reasonable? Sorry.

Really? Life comes from some chemicals under a rock? In a swamp? Or life comes from God? Think.

Reflect on him. Blessedness is something that only God can bring us into. Only the true God can do this. This is the real world. And so you don't look at the world.

What we learn in faith is to look at the world, but do not let the world circumscribe and limit who the triune God is, but let our knowledge and our understanding of the triune God and his promises and his great love, that he desires you and me, despite knowing perfectly who we are, that he would make us his child by adoption and grace, that he would take away everything I've done wrong, everything I'm ashamed of, all would be laid on Christ when he died on the cross, and that the perfect relationship of Jesus to the Father and the Holy Spirit, that that would somehow be bestowed upon me and clothe me, not just in my externals, but all the way through me.

It would clothe my mind, my will, my affections, my creativity, my desires, my longings, my yearnings, my body, my past, my present, my future, all the way through.

[31 : 13] Don't let the world circumscribe what God can do, but take God at his word and believe that his promise, and if the triune God has made a promise and guarantees it, he has guaranteed it.

Why will I stand before God one day and be entered into his kingdom? Not because I have lived a good life, not because I am a minister, but purely and utterly because I believed God at his word and I believe him and the promise he has made to bring me into that blessedness and right relationship with him when I put my faith and trust in what God has done to bring me into that, and that is what will...

That's it. The next part, it's easier to understand the next little bit if you think of the Bible story about Peter walking on the water, but I'll read the text and then I'll show you how it's easier to understand if you remember that story.

Look at verse 20, and in verse 20 it says, no unbelief made Abraham waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

That is why his faith was counted to him as righteousness. So what this is sort of getting and going back with the hope and everything like that against hope, it's a little bit like when Peter was walking on the water, he saw the storms and he saw the waves and he saw the wind, and he's very aware of that, and he's a fisherman, and he knows roughly how deep the water is, and he knows all of those problems, but he hears Jesus promise, ask him to come over to him, and he believes Jesus at his word, and so he steps out of the boat and walks on the water, and at some point in time, looking at the water, he takes his eyes off of Jesus and looks at the water, and then he sinks, but he does not drown because Jesus has called him to himself, and even when Peter's faith is weak and his eyes waver and wander, it is the strong word and promise of Jesus which is our guarantee so that even as Peter sinks, the strong arm of Jesus reaches out and grabs him and brings him into the boat.

[33 : 49] Jesus brings him into the boat. That's so beautiful. That is the Christian hope.

So why all this language of counting? I talked about this more last week because the fundamental way that we tend to think of how we're going to be made right with God is that, you know, I went to church these many times, and I read my Bible.

As a Christian, I read my Bible these many times, and I repented of these sins these many times, and I'm making all of these things over here, and that's sort of how I think, and then over here is the bad things I've done, but you're pretty confident at the end of the day when you die, the good things in your life all get added up, and the bad things get added up, but the good things outweigh the bad, and now God has some type of obligation to get you in, to allow you into heaven, and then, of course, I said last week we used the analogy that God doesn't even think in those categories.

He says if you put your faith and trust in Jesus, and in a sense, it's like a person who's completely and utterly impoverished and is being chased by all sorts of people marrying a billionaire, and all those debts are covered, and here there's a different, you know, a different type of, and the problem with all of that type of language is that we think we can control and obligate God by our good deeds. I haven't told this story in a while, but back when we were still in the building and we were taking a stand on certain issues of biblical faithfulness and the guy was opposed to it, and he said to me, would you change what you do if I told you I'm going to stop giving money to the church?

[35 : 28] And as soon as he said that, his wife, who was drinking coffee, had one of those experiences where the coffee went the wrong way and she snorted it out her nostrils, and she laughed and said, honey, you're going to have to give a lot more money if you think that's going to have any impact on him.

I mean, he probably gave \$20 every four months when he showed up and thinks he was giving us a big deal. But we're like that with God. Really? Oh, wow, I am so impressed.

You went to church 25 times like in 2016. Like, really? Really? How's that going to give me blessedness? That doesn't make any sense. Only God can bring me into blessedness.

And all he asks is that I believe, take him at his word and believe him and believe what he promised. And look again at what he promised. It can be seen in the last verses, 23 to 25.

This is now us. Oh, sorry, I'm looking at the wrong here. 23 to 25. But the words, it was counted to him, were not written for his sake alone. In other words, when we just believe God, so the normal human way is to think of, you know, he's adding up the good and bad and all of that.

[36 : 38] But no, no, no, no. What we need to understand is this. It's when you put your faith and trust in Jesus and you believe, because God has promised that if you put your faith and trust in Jesus who died the death that you deserve and lived the life you cannot live and suffered death and tasted all there is to taste of death and then rose from the dead, and if you believe that that is God's provision for you to enter into blessedness, then he takes you.

Only he can bring you into blessedness, and all that counting doesn't matter. What matters is that God has brought you into blessedness. That's what matters. But the words, verse 23, it was counted to him, were not written for his sake alone, that's in Genesis 15, but for ours, yours and mine.

It will be counted to us who believe into God, who raised from the dead, Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

And that's the image that I was trying to get, is that when we believe that God has provided this way and we believe him, we believe his promise, and we accept that that's the way by trusting Jesus as our Savior and Lord, and he guarantees bringing us into blessedness, it begins on this side of the grave in little tiny seeds, and on the other side of the grave, it will be seen in all of its fullness, and as I go through the trials and the problems and then temptations of this world, I am invited time and time and time again in the midst of it to remember that I have to take God at his word, there's nothing I can do other than take God at his word and believe his promise and live out of his promise, and when I live out of his promise in gratitude, I will start to live in very, very, very different ways, even to the point of every time I had those experiences while I was in Tucson, I just said, God, you are such a good God, and I'm not saying this because I am particularly holy, but because we live out of the promise of God to us, and when you live out of that promise, you begin to live out of gratitude and see the world in a different way, you begin to live in the real world, and this image of the death means that everything bad has been covered, has been dealt with in a way that is just, we'll talk about that more in coming weeks, and this idea of being justified, it's the same word as rightness, the rightness of Jesus comes upon me and into every level and part and nuance and crack of me and all my depths and in all my future and all my breadth and all my width and all my

height and my lower, it comes and clothes all of me.

All of me is his, I belong to him when I take him at his word and believe his promise. Just want to say one other thing before we close.

[39 : 42] If you just look at verse 20 again, yeah, 20 of chapter 4, there's a really good lesson here about how to grow in our faith.

Look what it says. It says here, no unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God. So part of it is just remembering the promise of God. But here, look at the main thing. He grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God.

He grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God. Give him glory. Give him glory.

Think about who he is. Think about his attributes. As you read the Bible, look at what the truth he wants us to know, the promises he wants us to believe, the wisdom he wants to share, and ask him to make it more real in your heart and the heart of your loved ones and thank him.

Give him glory for the precious promises and his wisdom and the truth and for who he is. And in all things, just say, Father, I do not deserve your favor, but you are so kind and so loving and so good and so gentle that you would call me to hear your promise and that you, by your Holy Spirit, would enable me to take you at your word and believe your promise to believe in Jesus as the way that you will bring me at the end into blessedness.

[41 : 28] I invite you to stand. Thank you. bow our heads in prayer. Father, I give you thanks and praise that you know each one of us so perfectly.

You know each false front that we have, each illusion and delusion that we wrap our minds around or we hide behind and to hide from ourselves and hide from other people and you know everyone that we've ever used and everyone that we will use and you see through all of those things, knowing them all to see us as we really are and you loved us.

You love us. and you did not turn your face away from us when you see all the false identities and idols and arrogance and wounds and our excellence.

Father, you don't turn your eyes away from us but still you love us and sent your son and promised that when we put our faith and trust, when we take you at your word and believe in your promise and put our faith in Jesus that Father, you may make us right with you in a way which means that we will dwell and be in blessedness for all eternity, blessedness of new resurrection bodies, the blessedness of a renewed earth and heavens and you do all of that for us and so Father, we ask that you would promise that we would help us to believe that promise and then live out of that promise day by day.

And so Father, we thank you and we ask that you would do this work in our lives and we ask all of this in the name of Jesus, your son and our savior and all God's people said, amen.