

Messy Faith is All We Have!

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word.

You have been learning that we are sinful. You have been learning that there is nothing good in us. You have been learning that there is nothing that we could do to ever save ourselves.

And He has shown the Jews that. He has shown them that the law only made us wicked. The law only brought us to a place in our life that we realized that we were failures and in need of a Savior.

Then He brings out Abraham to prove that it was never about anything you did, but it was about what He did. Salvation is a God thing, not a man thing.

Salvation is a God thing, not a man thing. And so He uses an illustration from the Old Testament that you looked at last week while I was going somewhere preaching.

[1 : 05] Oh, how I believe. And you saw that it wasn't Abraham's circumcision because he doesn't get circumcision to more than a decade after it was counted to him for righteousness.

He believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. But what I love about this, and if you take notes, write this down, messy faith. I just want you to see that some of you even might get the idea that it's your faith that saves you.

It's your faith that saves you. And you say, well, it is my faith that saves me, brother. Well, it is your faith that saves you, but sometimes you have faith in your faith. And it's like you think my faith is what got it done.

And you're like, well, I just got this great faith. And some of you doubt your salvation because you're like, I just hope I had enough faith. I hope I believed right. I hope I prayed the right prayer.

And so He gives us this wild story. I mean, this story is like one of my favorite in the whole Bible. It is the craziest idea you have ever heard.

[2 : 08] He said, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. Then he proceeds in the verses that I'm about to read to you. And he talks to you and he says, man, Abraham never doubted me.

He says, Abraham did never think about how his wife's body was old and she couldn't have babies. And he never thought about the fact that he was so old and he couldn't have babies.

And he didn't stagger at the promise. He just believed me. He was like fully convinced. And I read and I think, man, that Abraham was one believing man until I read the Old Testament.

And then I read in the Old Testament how he was just the opposite of everything God just said. And let me just kind of tell you the story and we'll go back through it again. But the story really goes like this.

God said, Abraham, I am going to be your exceeding great reward. I will be your shield and your protector. Abraham, you're going to have children. They're going to be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore.

- [3 : 07] And Abraham said, man, I believe you, God. And God said, I'll count that as righteousness. And so what you're like, well, that's great. Well, a few years go by and Abraham hadn't had a child yet.
- And Abraham goes to God in prayer. And he said, you know, God, I did believe you. And you did tell me that I was going to have a bunch of kids. And I mean, we're moving on in age, man. We're pushing 50, 60 years old.
- And I ain't had any kids yet. And just since I'm pretty afraid you might not be able to pull off what you said, here's what I got in mind to help you out, God. Because I believe you, but it seems like you might need a little nudge.
- You might need a little bit of help. So I thought maybe I could offer you my servant. And we'll just call him my son so we can say you got it done. And God said, I'm not going to use your servant.
- I told you you was going to have kids. Okay, Lord, whatever you say, I believe you. This is not working out. And so later on, years go by again.
- [4 : 06] And he and his wife are talking. And his wife says, baby, I know you want to have kids. And I know you believe God said we're going to have kids. But I mean, do you not realize menopause has, it's no longer pausing.
- It's over. We have come and we have gone and it's done. And I don't know what we're going to do. She said, I got an idea. Why don't you sleep with my handmaid and let her kind of be like a step wife.
- And she can have a baby and we can call that your son. And Abraham said, well, good idea. I think he needs help. I think we'll do that. They have a child.
- Ishmael is born. And he says, God, how about letting Ishmael be my son? And God said, I told you I'd give you a son. And I'm not going to count Ishmael. Okay, Lord.
- All right. You said it. My wife is so stinking old. She couldn't have a baby if a miracle happened. This ain't working. All right.
- [5 : 02] Believe you. Time continues to go on. And God sends an angel down and says, Abraham, you're going to have a kid in a year. And Abraham laughs. Knee slapper.
- Hard to believe that one. Sarah laughs. Ain't going to happen. A year later, it happened. Now, here's a beautiful part of the story.
- You see, whenever you look at what you do, it don't look like it can work. And you keep trying. And I love this story because I know Abraham from my side of the story, from my side of the coin, from me looking at what happened on this side of the thing.
- I'm like, you think Abraham had great faith, God? I see Abraham as like a quivering coward. I see Abraham as the guy who doesn't really believe you.
- And God says, Austin, I really don't care how you look at it. If you'll read Romans 4, you'll see how I look at it. And then here's what God said. By the way, your faith looks pretty weak too, Austin. You keep, man, do you really think you got saved because of your great faith?
- [6 : 09] Your faith's about like Abraham's faith. It's not your faith. It's who you believe. And you too often put your faith in you and it becomes a man thing. Salvation's a God thing.
- Could you repeat with me this? Salvation is a God thing. Can you say that with me? Salvation is a God. This God does the saving. Amen. When did he love us? While we were yet. Hey, when did he die for us?
- While we were yet sinners. We love him because he first loved us. It's him and he comes to him. So read with me if you would. Romans chapter 4. Read with me Romans chapter 4 if you would.

Verse 17 to the end of the chapter. The Bible says, as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations. You should circle that, underline that, and point arrows at it.

Here's what God's saying. I just want you to get clear, Abraham. It wasn't you getting circumcised. Honestly, it's not like you got baptized and everything's okay. He said, I have made thee a father of many nations.

[7 : 13] Before whom he believed even God. God who quickened the dead. God who raises the dead. God who wakes the dead up. And God who calls those things which be not as though they were.

You know who the hero of the story is, don't you? What's his name? Who's the hero of the story? God. Verse 18. Who against hope, believed in hope that he might become the father of nations according to that which was spoken.

You should underline that, circle that, point arrows at it. Here's what Paul, here's what Paul's saying. Abraham believed that which was, say it with me, that which was spoken.

Would you hold up that which was spoken right now? Because this morning you have that which was spoken. This is it. That's what we believe in. That's what we're trusting. We're believing that which was spoken, which is the word of God.

God spoke to him. He believed it. 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 a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.

[8 : 17] He staggered not at the promise. Did you notice that in verse 19? I mean, really. Did you notice verse 19? That verse is like wild and crazy. Look at verse 19. Being not weak in faith.

Oh yeah. He considered not his own body, now dead, when he was about a hundred years old. And he didn't even consider the fact that Sarah's womb was dead. All right.

Okay, God. Yeah, he did. Yeah, he did. But he didn't. Because you see, God isn't counting how strong you believe.

He's counting how strong he is. Do you get the difference? When Abraham's going, God, I really, God, if we're going to talk about this, I mean, I really was kind of struggling in my faith.

And God said, no, you weren't. I mean, I know you weren't because you're human. You're humans. You just, I mean, you have real problems believing. But you believe in me and I never have problems. So don't worry about it. I got it under control. Keep reading.

[9 : 16] Verse 20. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully persuaded that he had promised, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

And therefore, it was imputed to him for righteousness. You should underline that and circle that and draw arrows to it. It was imputed to him. It was counted to him. It was written on his account book for righteousness.

What was written there? You know what the truth? Extremely weak faith. Extremely weak faith.

Verse 23. Now it was not written for his sake alone. Thank the Lord. He wrote that so I'd know that my faith, those strong. How many of you have ever, how many of you have ever questioned whether or not you were saved?

Would you raise your hand? How many of you have ever thought, how many of you thought this? Just, I mean, just answer me if you would. How many of you have ever thought, I ain't sure I prayed the right words. Anybody ever thought that? How many of you ever thought, not sure I believe strong enough.

[10 : 23] You ever thought that? Okay. You see, you're putting too much emphasis on the wrong person. See, Abraham did all of that. But when God looked at it, he said, he didn't even stagger. If you can get this picture, boy, you're going to go home and say, glory to God, I'm saved.

Not because of how good I am. Not because of what I did. But because of how strong the one I believed in was. And it was counted to him, imputed to him for righteousness. Verse 23. Now it was not written for his sake alone.

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.

Would you put a circle around, believe on him. How are we saved? We are saved by believing on him. I'm not even getting to my message. And we may just really mess this whole message up this morning.

But it's not believing on your prayer. It's not believing on your faith. It's not believing on how you held your tongue. It's not believing on who prayed with you. It's believing on.

[11 : 25] Come on, help me. It's believing on him. Who? Who? Him that raised up Jesus, our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.

Father, please teach your people. Let them go out of here happy today. Let them go out of here rejoicing today. Let them go out of here excited today about what a good God you are.

Let them go out today magnifying you and praising you and lifting you high because of who you are and what you've done. And I will give you all praise and all honor and all glory in Jesus' name.

Amen. First thing I want you to write down is this. He made us, not we ourselves. He made us. Just write that down. He made us.

Look, if you would, in Romans chapter 4 verse 17. As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations. I have made thee. And you're going to have to get a hold of this up front right now before you get started in your Christian life.

[12 : 28] It is God who saved us. It is God who made us. Abraham, I made you. You didn't make yourself. Abraham, you didn't get yourself saved. Abraham, you didn't get yourself ready to go to heaven.

Abraham, you didn't get circumcised. Abraham, you didn't believe in such a way. I made you. It's not about you, Abraham. You see, Abraham received a great promise that he would be the father of many nations.

Abraham watched the years go by and thought that God wasn't getting the job done and he wanted to help God. He offered it to have his servant count as a son. He offered to have Sarah have a son with Hagar.

When God told them both they were going to have a child, they both laughed at God. The emphasis in the verse is not on Abraham. It's on God.

The emphasis in the verse is not on Abraham. It's on God. It's the God who gives life to the dead. It's the God who makes things be that are not. Your emphasis has to be on God and his word and not on you and your ability.

[13 : 30] When you talk about salvation, your emphasis has to be on God and his word and not you and your ability. Most of the people who doubt their salvation do so because they put their emphasis on the wrong person.

It is God that makes us and not ourselves. Now, I'm going to show you a couple things real quick. But listen to me. Man, I struggled for years and preachers didn't explain to me about salvation. And they made me doubt my salvation.

I used to go to church. And man, the invitation, I'd be like, I need to get saved. I was in a camp meeting and this preacher was preaching. And I was a pastor of a church and I've been preaching for years. And he said, I know preachers that aren't even saved.

And I was sitting there going, you're talking about me? Man, I began to wonder about my salvation because it was so, man, they could so easily manipulate your emotions.

Your salvation wasn't based on your emotions. Did I cry enough? Did I get excited enough? Did I tell enough people about Jesus? It's on God and his word.

[14 : 30] He made us and not we ourselves. Can you say amen right there? First thing you need to know about that is, it's he that made us. Remember, know the character of God. God doesn't lie.

God doesn't lie. Would you write that down somewhere? Remember, God doesn't lie. That's his character. The Bible says in Titus 1, 2, in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began.

Now that word hope there gets some of y'all messed up. You read that and you go in hope of eternal life. Well, the word hope there is really kind of like the word expecting, anticipating, in anticipation of eternal life.

That God who cannot lie promised. You know, God said, God said I'd get saved and I'm looking for it and I'm waiting for it. And we call it, they're using the word hope there, but it's like, it's not like, man, I hope he's telling the truth.

I hope he's telling the truth. I hope he's telling the truth. That's not what's going on. But it's like, it's like when we were kids, man, we lived out in the country. We didn't have visitors. Nobody came to our house except other farmers.

[15 : 39] And when any family was going to come, man, our family get up early. Mama put up the towels that had holes in them. You could see through and she'd get out the really fancy ones. So all the city folks thought we had really good towels.

And we put toilet paper out in the outhouse instead of Sears and robot catalogs. I mean, we really dolled up the place so people could be excited about coming to our house. And we'd all take a bath and we'd be sitting on the porch hoping they'd get there.

Now, we knew they were coming, but we didn't know when they were coming. We were anticipating their arrival. Can you understand that? We were anticipating a buddy. And when we'd hear a car coming down the gravel road, we'd be looking.

There they come. There they come. We'd run in the house and say, mama, they're coming. Mama, they're coming. That's the word hope here. In hope of eternal life. That God that cannot lie promised before the world began.

You serve a God. I want you to hear this. Did you know God can't do everything? What cannot God do? God cannot lie. God cannot. And he gave me his word.

[16 : 38] He loved me while I was yet a sinner. He loved me before I loved him. He said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. He said, then the just shall live by faith and he cannot lie.

He's a God who cannot lie. Another verse. 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 13. Some of us kind of waver and wobble and we're not sure. But his character doesn't depend on your faith.

His character doesn't depend on your faith. In 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 13. If we believe not, that doesn't change anything. He's still faithful because he can't deny himself.

You see, maybe if God was as shaky as I am. If God was as on and off as I can be. If God was as indecisive as Abraham.

We'd have a problem. But here's what he said. Even when you guys don't believe like you're supposed to. I still am who I am. I don't lie. And when I say it, it's true. In Numbers chapter 23 and verse 19.

[17 : 45] The Bible says, God is not a man that he should lie. Neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good?

Do you really think God's like a man? I know I'm saved today because I have the word of a God who cannot lie. That's how I know I'm saved. Can you say amen there?

I know I'm saved because I have the word of a God. In Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 18. It's impossible for him to lie. That by two immutable or unchangeable things.

In which it was impossible for God to lie. We might have strong consolation. We have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope that is set before us. It's impossible for God to lie.

He cannot lie. It's impossible for him to lie. By the way, he never even twists and turns and changes. You know, if you ever, you know, one of the first vehicles that Betty and I bought after we got married.

[18 : 42] A man in the church wanted to help us, quote unquote. And he said he would help us. I said, man, I can't get a loan. I'm a kid. I never had a loan. Only loan I had was when dad went to the bank and I borrowed \$400 to buy my first Corvair.

I didn't say Corvette, Corvair. That's a motor in the back. Piece of junk. Kill you if you drive it. Car. And I bought that. And now it was time for us to get another vehicle. And he told me he would sell it to me. And I can't remember the exact price.

I think it was maybe \$1,700 or \$1,900. And he said, don't you worry. I'll go to the bank and I'll get your loan. And so I was like, man, this is the greatest guy in the world. You know, the businessman loves Jesus, loves me.

His son would later become my assistant pastor. Well, we got to the bank. We walked in. He told me, he said, don't you worry about that. You're going to fill out these loan papers. You ain't going to have one problem. We walked in the bank. And he upped the price like \$400.

I mean, he leaned across the table and said, go ahead and make out that loan for maybe. Maybe he told me \$1,700. He said, make it out for \$2,100. I was going. That ain't what he told me.

[19 : 43] And I didn't know what to say. I mean, good night. I couldn't have gotten a loan. I needed a car. And this guy was going to help me. So I signed the papers and paid the full deal. Walked out there thinking, I ain't never going back to the bank with that guy. Amen. There was a shadow with that guy.

There was a variableness with that guy. There was a turning with that guy. You ever been around people? Man, they tell you one thing. But man, you just got to watch them. When they say one, it doesn't necessarily mean one.

One could mean two. You ever been there? Amen. But God ain't like that. Watch what it says about our God. In James chapter 1 and verse 17, every good and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

You never have to wonder. Let me tell you something. 2,000 years from now, if Jesus hasn't come back, this will still be true. 10,000 years from now, in eternity, it will still be true.

Our God doesn't change. Our God is a God that keeps his word. And he said, Abraham, he said, I'm trying to tell you people in Romans, you can't, you can't, you can't, you can't.

[20 : 46] And then he says, but if you'll believe me, you can be saved. And then we're going, okay, I can screw up enough faith. He said, no, your faith will stink anyway. It's a messy faith. You believe the best you can. Don't worry, I'll take care of the rest.

Because your faith, they know that God. Abraham, he said, Abraham was a man of great faith. But you read the story and you're like, no, he wasn't. That really gives me hope. Amen. God, God gives me hope.

Number two, salvation is by faith. Second thing I want you to see is salvation is by faith. Go to verse 22. Romans chapter 4, verse 22, if you would. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

It was imputed to him for righteousness. Verse 24, but for us also to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on him. If we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification.

It was imputed to him for righteousness. It imputed to us if we believe in Jesus, in God who raised up Jesus from the dead. The story here about Abraham and faith is the story of how he got saved.

[21 : 56] He was believing God and he was believing God's word. You see, what gets you saved is believing God. It's what God did, not what you do.

Verse 18, 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. It wasn't anything that he did, but it was the person he believed.

It will always be seeing what God said and just trusting him. We are saved the exact same way. Believing God and what he said and what he did.

Verse 24 and 25, you just read it. For us also to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on him. We believe. What do we believe? We believe that Jesus died on a cross to pay our sin debt.

We believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. We believe that Jesus was delivered for our offenses. We believe Jesus was raised for our justification. Verse 25, I am simply believing what God says.

[22 : 59] Do not lose focus on the fact that it was imputed to him. It was counted to him. Now look at this way a second. That word imputed is a very strong word. Here's what it's saying.

He didn't get it. He didn't do it. I just counted it to him. You got to understand something. Salvation isn't. Boy, Abraham was such a good guy that I couldn't deny the facts.

Abraham is such a good guy. I'll just say, okay, Abraham, you win. You cross the finish line. You're just, man, you're the stuff and it's yours. You don't need it imputed to you if that's the case.

You don't need it imputed to your account. It's your account if you did it on your own. But what happened was Abraham believed God. That's it. By the way, he had a messy faith even when he believed God.

His belief in God was like, God, I believe you, but. God, I believe you, but. God, I believe you, but. God, I believe you, but. I mean, he spends a lifetime believing and doubting and believing and doubting and believing and doubting.

[23 : 58] And then God looks at him and says, you know what, I'm going to count your faith as righteousness. That's important for you to get because you see, if you're not. It's so easy if you say, well, did I believe enough?

I don't have the faith like Abraham did. Look at there. He never even doubted. He never considered his wife's dead body. He never considered his old age. He never considered it.

He was one great man of faith. But the Bible gives you both sides of the story. It gives you how God saw it and how it really was. Tonight or this morning, you know, you haven't been that strong in your faith.

You trusted God and you've had your days when you woke up and said, glory to God, I'm saved. You've had your other days you woke up and said, man, I sure hope I am. And you've woke up on other mornings and you've said, man, I hope he meant what he said.

And you woke up on other mornings saying, I just ain't too sure. You say, so I don't really know if I'm saved. But you see, it wasn't about you. It was about him. It was counted to him.

[25 : 03] God didn't look at him and say, Abraham, you are so good. We're just going to say you're saved. That's not what happened. He looked at Abraham and said, you stink, buddy. But since you're willing to trust me, I'm going to count that as righteousness.

Abraham didn't do it. God decided to count it to him. It was nothing that Abraham did, but all that God did. That's why you can be sure your salvation. It's not you doing it, but God.

As foolish as this may come across to you. You know, Noah rode the storm out. The flood came. And for 40 days, it rained day and night.

But you know, Noah, how many of y'all think Noah was a really good swimmer? Say amen. He was as snug as a bug in a rug. He was inside.

It was storming and lightning and lightning's flashing, thunders rolling. The water, I mean, it had to be horrible. This great big monstrosity of a boat. Man, you're talking about a drama, I mean, he needed some.

[26 : 07] But you know what? When the flood's over and it's a year later and Noah walks out, Noah didn't go. Whew! Man, I held on. I'm a good swimmer. I'm a good boat rider.

He rode up. When he got out, he said, man, God did have a good boat built, didn't he? God shut the door real good, didn't he? It was all God. There was some other guy. It was you. And he went outside that boat and he drove a nail on the side of that boat and said, I'll ride this storm out.

I don't have to be in that boat. I can hang on. You know, and he might have hung on for a day or two, but about 40 days later, he probably got tired. He might have got cold. He probably had to go to the bathroom and he got hungry. He couldn't let go of the nail.

There was no, there is no way you hold on. It is all God saving us. Go with me to Romans chapter 4, verse 18. Real faith is in God's promise.

Just write this down. God's promise, not our person. God's promise, not our person. When you believe God, you're believing God's promise, not yourself.

[27 : 09] Verse 18. 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. When Abraham looked at his side of the equation, he knew it was hopeless.

Abraham looked at and he said, I am so old and my wife is so old. There's no way we could ever have children. So there's no hope. But I will hope against hope.

According to that which was spoken. Look at the verse. Abraham said, you got your Bible on verse 18? Abraham said, I will hope against hope based on what he said.

Not on what I can do. Look at what it says. According to that which was spoken. So shall thy seed be. Look this way. This is corny maybe to you, but it'll help you see it. Abraham looked at Sarah and said, baby, he said we're going to have kids.

And honey, you're a hundred. You're 90 years old. You quit being able to have kids about 30 years ago. You're a grandma. You got whiskers growing now.

[28 : 13] You're not like a young woman that has babies. Let me look at the mirror. I ain't like a daddy that has kids neither. But he said we was going to have kids. So I'm going to trust him.

Just to look at you, baby. Don't think there's any kids coming. Just look at me. No kids are coming. But I'm going to believe what he spoke. And he said, so shall your seed be. It wasn't faith in what he could do.

It was faith in what God said. You are saved today. Not by what you can do. But by what God says. Can you say amen there? Takes the pressure off.

Takes the pressure off. It's not what I do. It's what our God does. Look if you would. Sarah does no longer have children. Verse 19. Being not weak in faith. He considered not his own body now dead.

When it was about 100 years old. Neither the deadness of a womb. The only hope Abraham had was that God would do for him what he couldn't do for himself. The only hope he had was that God would do for him what he couldn't do for himself.

[29 : 13] So he believed God. Verse 20. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief. He was strong in faith. He gave glory to God. He was fully persuaded that God was able to do what God said he could do.

When you consider your salvation, you need to know that it's beyond you. You can't be good enough to be saved. You cannot be good enough to be saved. How many of you would be honest?

You won't be honest. I mean, it's just a natural thing. You don't want to do it. But how many of you said, I'll try and never lie again. And then you lied again. Has that ever happened to you?

Do something. How many of you said, I got a New Year's resolution, but you didn't keep it? How many of you said, I will not miss church? But you did. How many of you said, I will always read my Bible every day?

But you didn't. How many of you said, I'll always honor God with my money? But you didn't. How many of you said, I'll never look at another woman and think thoughts I shouldn't? But you did. How many of you said, you'll honor your parents and treat your spouse right and you'll be a good parent?

[30 : 13] But you didn't. The truth is, all the law does is give you a deep sense of guilt and debt. You have tried to be perfect, but have continually had to reevaluate and lower what you set as a goal.

You know, young Christian guy is going to date and he's just getting that age. He's going to date and somebody teaches him in the youth meeting, buddy, you should date the right kind of girl. So he sits down and he writes down exactly what the right kind of woman he should marry looks like.

And what she's like. Well, she loves Jesus and she's saved and she goes to church and she reads her Bible. And he writes down a hundred things. Then he goes looking for a girlfriend. Comes home, says, that won't work.

Knocks off ten of them, says, I'll look for 90 of them. Ten of them ain't working. Goes a few more weeks, says, down to 80, 50, 60, 60, 50, 30, 20. Finally, just said, if she's a girl and she'll let me marry her, it'll do.

That's basically how it works when you get in this saving thing. You know, I'll be perfect for Jesus. Well, I'll keep messing up on that one. Let's take that off the list. I, I, I, let's take that off the list.

[31 : 18] And before long, you're like, man, I ain't going to be able to do it. Don't you understand what happens? Don't you understand what happens anytime you focus on yourself and what you can do? It only leads to frustration.

Because you can't. So much of our Christianity has been based on us. Your frustration and bitterness with your own sense of failure will drive you to the Lord or away from the Lord.

Abraham believed God, not himself. He was beyond being able to believe in himself. He'd come to a point of utter failure. It was impossible for him to answer his own prayer.

All he had left was God and God's promise. And that's all you have. If you're truly saved, you came to a point when you realized, I can't.

Only he can. Fourth thing you might write down. It's not the strength of your faith. It's not the strength of your faith.

[32 : 24] We should get that. It's not the strength of your faith. One of the greatest lessons here is how God saw Abraham's faith. I love it. You see, you've got to understand, the judge, the Lord, the king, when he looked at Abraham's faith, he sees something totally different than what I see.

How many of you have ever read the story of Lot? And you remember, I mean, you know the story of Lot? If you do shake, you get amen. Wake up. Do something. I think I need to dance a jig. You got up an hour early and you're about to sleep. Are you with me?

You know, you remember the story of Lot? I mean, Lot was such a pervert. He lives in Sodom and Gomorrah. He's on the city council down in Sodom and Gomorrah. Two angels come to visit him and he offers his virgin daughters to the Sodomites to do whatever they want to do with his daughters.

I mean, this guy is one wicked pervert. I don't like the guy at all. If you're looking for the man of the year, well, Lot's not getting in my book. And then I get over to the New Testament. Here's what God said.

He said, righteous, just Lot, just Lot, vexed with a filthy conversation of the wicked. I'm like, must be a different Lot. I see David kill Uriah, sleep with Bathsheba, and all that junk he does.

[33 : 33] And God says, never had a man like old Dave. I'm like, I guess you hadn't. Murdering, raping, adulterous member of the church. I ain't had any of them either, praise God.

But you see, God doesn't save you based on you. He saves you based on him. Abraham hoped when he had no hope.

Abraham wasn't weak in his faith. Abraham, in verse 20, didn't even stagger or get shocked when God made such a promise. Abraham had strong faith. Verse 21, Abraham was fully persuaded.

Now, for the rest of the story, like Paul Harvey used to say. Abraham believed, but when time went by, he began to doubt. Abraham goes to God with a servant and said, let him be my son.

Abraham waits and still nothing. So he and Sarah plot to have Hagar sleep with him. And Ishmael to be the heir. God says, no. Abraham keeps waiting. And finally, when the angel says, within a year, the baby will be born.

[34 : 31] Abraham and Sarah laugh. Both of them laughed. And then they lied about laughing. They said, we didn't laugh. Yeah, you did. God recorded it. Yeah, you did. What's the moral of the story?

It wasn't their faith, but it was their God. You put too much emphasis on yourself and the equation of faith. You think it has to do with the right words that you prayed, or if you believed enough, or if you meant it enough, or if you understood enough.

The truth is that Abraham's faith wasn't all that strong when you see it from the human side, but God saw it as great and perfect faith. Could it be that you are too man-oriented in your understanding of salvation?

Do you think of you and what you do and did when you think of salvation, or do you think of God and what he did when he saved you? The hero of the story isn't Abraham and his great faith, but God who promised and kept his word.

It's God counting the little struggling faith that Abraham has as enough. Trust God. Focus on him. Get your eyes off yourself. You can have the security of your salvation.

[35 : 41] Watch. One more thing I want to talk to you about. I'm going to go a little over time, but watch. Leave here this morning knowing this. I am saved by the good grace of Almighty God.

I got saved when I was seven years old. I was a staggering little kid. I'd never done anything wrong to speak of, and I understood that Jesus died for me, and something was born in my heart, and I wanted to trust Jesus, and I did.

And can I just tell you since I was seven, I have messed up more times than I've done right. Can I just tell you that I have messed up so many times since I got saved that I'm sick of my own self. And if we were going to count up all the good Austin's done, all the bad Austin's done, Austin's in a heap of trouble.

But thank God Austin's not going to heaven based on what Austin did, but on what Jesus did on the cross at Calvary. I would be so miserable this morning. I couldn't stand here and preach to you if I couldn't stand here and say, Hey, I'm a mess.

I'm not a good child. I don't deserve to go to heaven, but I serve a great, wonderful God who saved me in spite of me. Boy, that's a wonderful thing. I'll go home today, sure of my salvation.

[36 : 52] Not because of how good I am, but because of how good he is. And then if you just let me take just a couple of seconds, I'd like to talk to you about living by faith because I think most of you may be saved, but I do think maybe some of you struggle with your salvation and you doubt your salvation and you wonder if you're saved.

And I think the reason you do that is because you don't understand. It wasn't Abraham's great faith. And pastors love to manipulate you with that. And they love to try to make you feel like you're not quite good.

I need somebody to get baptized around here. It don't look good for me as a pastor when people ain't getting baptized. It don't look good when people ain't getting saved. So if I can get y'all saved 25 times a piece, I'll look better. But the truth is that's too much on me and too much on you.

And what it ought to be on is, man, we serve a great God. When you walk out of here today, don't you walk out and say, man, I got saved three times. Walk out here saying, I trusted God.

I trusted God. And I'm saved because I believe God. And God saved me. Amen. I messed up. I know. I have. But I serve a great big God.

[37 : 58] Amen. If you hadn't trusted him, you're not saved. And some of you might be trying to do some things by faith. And so there's some lessons. The first one is about salvation.

And I'm going to skip everything I would have said about that and take you on. But I would remind you in Romans 4, 17, he said, I have made thee. Could I just say to you this morning, I'm a pastor and a preacher and a missionary.

And I don't know why I get invited. I don't know why people want to listen to me preach anywhere. I don't know why anybody would ever have me. But I can tell you this. He made me. If there's anything good about me, he made me.

The majority about me, I know. Anything I made is really, really bad. But I'd like to show you that some of you want to step out and deal with issues of life.

You're like, how do I know if God wants me on the mission field? How do I know what God wants me to do with my money? And how do I know how to run my life? And it's going to take faith. And some of you got this idea that it all is so clear.

[39 : 05] And it's all cut and dried. I believe God and bam, that's it. It just works. It's not the way faith is. It's faith's messy. Because on your end of things, you're always a mess.

And your faith is never as big as you think it is. But it's not about your faith. It's about your great God you believe. It means taking God at his word.

It means knowing that everything is a focus on how great and how wonderful he is. It means hoping and anticipating when there's really no earthly, physical reason that you should.

But you simply believe that God is who he said he is and will do what he said he would do. Some of you aren't giving yet. You've not learned to tithe and give.

Some of you haven't learned to lead your home. Some of you men haven't stepped up to be the spiritual leader in your home. And you're afraid you can't do it. And you're like, I'm a mess, man. I'm a mess. I want to and I believe God.

[40 : 02] But I'm a mess. Every one of us have always been a mess. This is not a reunion of the guys that do so good.

This is a reunion of the guys who trust the God who does so good. This is not a, hey, here come the great heroes of faith. Every hero of faith walks in. And here's his only claim to faith.

I stink, but he's good. Next, I stink, but he's good. Next, I stink. You've got the hero on the wrong side of the page. You read Hebrews 11 and say, look at all those great men.

They believe God. The hero of Hebrews 11 is not them and their faith. It's the God they believed in. It's always God. You learn not to consider the circumstances that you can see and understand.

You know that you will believe God and give him glory, even though it's super hard to believe. You decide that you will act against everything in you that screams to the contrary of God's word. Everything seems to say no.

[41 : 01] Boy, the human beings and the human race and the world system says don't believe God. And you hear it on the television, you read it in the newspaper, and you see it on the internet.

But you believe God. You're not fully persuaded about yourself or other persons, but you can be fully persuaded about God and his glory. That's what faith is.

It's believing God when there's no apparent reason to believe except his word. All you got is his word. And he'll be pleased with that.

Abraham said, I'll have a kid. I'm going to have a kid. I'm going to have a kid. I am. Abraham, you're old. I know, but he said I would.

I'm just going to believe what he said. Know that this kind of faith isn't as pretty as it is here in the Romans. You just remember the Genesis side of the story.

[41 : 58] Both are true. One's the way man sees it and the other's the way God sees it. Will you begin to act on what God says? Does he have control of your finances?

Are you afraid to do what he says? Does he have control of your circumstances? Are you trying to stay in control? Will you trust him with your future, the economy, the job, everything? Will you just believe God when there's no earthly reason to do so?

Will you step out and do the ministry God has called you to do? Don't use the excuse of weak faith. It simply doesn't work. Nobody's ever had strong faith.

Just a strong God that we have faith in. When God dealt with my heart about being a missionary, I was absolutely and completely certain that I couldn't do it.

I fought it for a long time. Not because I didn't want to, but I was like, God, you do not know who you're messing with. I don't have language ability.

[43 : 02] I don't have a good, strong church. I'm not a very good preacher. Not that great a soul winner. Just to be blunt, God, I can't think of anything I would do very well. There are days I try to think good of myself, but I'm not much.

And I said, but God, if I'm going to take your word, I'm going to believe you'd have me go to the mission field. I'm going to step out on some promises I see in this book. And I'm telling you, it was like, hold on for the wildest ride of your life.

Hold on for the wildest ride of your life. When I came here to start Vision Baptist Church. And man, I have days here at Vision Baptist Church where I think, I'm being honest with you.

If I resigned and helped this church, we ain't never going to get a piece of property. Things ain't never going to work out. We're never going to break 200. God, can I bring my manservant and we count him as a child?

God, please. I'm serious. I'm really having issues here. Hey, God, could we get with Hagar and have a baby? Can we figure out another way to do this? I'll just be honest with you. I have a real struggle. I mean, I struggle.

[44 : 07] See, that's the problem. You don't want to admit you struggle. You got all that facade going for you. But down deep inside, you are struggling. And you're saying, I just don't think I have real faith. Austin seems to have it together.

No, Austin's got about the messiest faith you've ever seen. I get up some mornings and all I can think is, man, if I was dead, it would do God a favor. The God of heaven looks down and says, you're right. You ain't nothing.

But if you just believe me, I'm fixing to do some big stuff with you. And he does big stuff with all of you. You are going to be used of God. Trust him. You can trust him with your money.

You can trust him with your kids. You can trust him with your marriage. You can trust him. You can trust what he said in his book. I know you can't trust you. I know what you're thinking. Oh, I messed up everything I ever did. Yeah, you have.

I mean, you are one big mess up. Thank God we can get hooked up to the guy who doesn't mess up. So today, trust Jesus. Father in heaven, I love you.

[45 : 05] And I pray you'd help your people to trust you. And Lord, I'm sorry again that I don't do too good on this. And Lord, man, I know that it's only you. But God, would you grow your people today?

I'll trust your word that Romans 4 is so beautiful and so fantastic. And God, you have a place for us. And you have things worked out for us.

And you are going to build a church. And you are going to win souls. And you are going to help us see our family members saved. And you are going to strengthen our marriages. And you are going to do all these great things because of how great you are. Help us trust you today.

God, if I try to do anything today, I promise you, you know it. Holy Spirit, you worked in my life. All I wanted to do was make Jesus look big today. And to lift up God and show him is great and powerful.

God, help your people trust you. And I'll give you praise. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. For more information, log on to www.visionbaptist.com where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.

[46 : 11] Thanks.