

“Good News regarding the Holy Spirit”

Romans 5:1-5 NASB

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. ³ And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵ and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

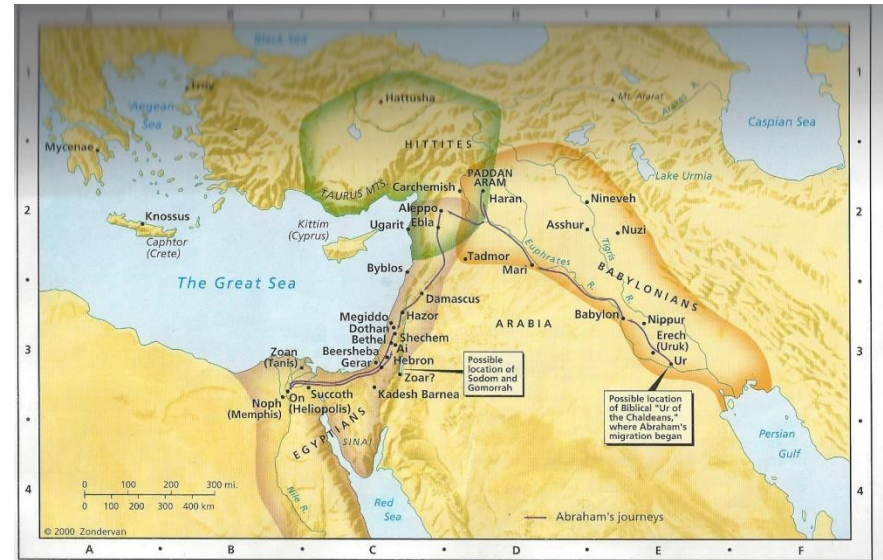
Three objectives prompt today’s sermon:

- **First, we need reminders of a promise God made long ago, that benefits us now.**
This promise profits us better than any billionaire uncle’s vow to remember us.
- **Purpose number two: show the advantages of believing God’s promise.**

All of us would like more staying power.

When others give up, wouldn’t it nice to find extra strength and keep going?

- **Third, when others feel frenzied despair, you’ll find peace and hope.**
People just like us found rich reward in God’s promise and we still can.



Zondervan map published in Bob’s old NIV Bible showing Ur lower right.

The story begins with a man named Abram.

In about 1800 BC, Abram’s father Terah, moved his family from Ur northwest to Haran.

Abram married a lady named Sarai.

Less than five minutes prior, this same woman shook our hands as she left the service, went to her vehicle, drove home, and decided to end her life.

Imagine, someone hearing my sermon and then immediately contemplating suicide.

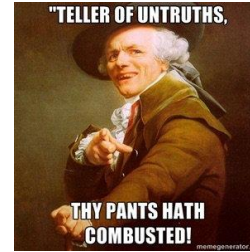
As we talked further, she told me why she felt so distressed.

At worship, the people nearby her all seemed happy, yet her life was falling apart. “If you knew what I know, you wouldn’t be dejected;” I said, “all those folks struggle, too.” **All human beings grapple with challenges.**

Abram was a good guy, but not perfect. Most Bible heroes were glaringly imperfect.

Just after God made His Genesis 12 promise to Abram, the old guy went down to Egypt and had one of those “Liar, liar, pants on fire” moments.

Abram told Pharaoh a big fat lie.¹



In the meantime, God changed their names to Sarah and Abraham.

Not until Abraham turned 99 and Sarah 89, did she become pregnant.

At age 90, Sarah gave birth to their son Isaac.

Let’s review Abraham’s circumstances:

As he and Sarah grew old, trusting God to keep his promise took great faith.

Think of a husband who promises his wife for decades that he’ll start taking out the trash without her having to nag.

He’s 98, she 88, and God still hadn’t fulfilled his promise.

We like to see immediate action, so we struggle to believe God’s promises.

Resurrection and heaven seem to some as pie-in-the-sky-like promises, don’t they?

¹ The phrase was likely invented by school kids fighting. “‘Liar, liar’—without the ‘pants on fire’—has been around a long time,” says Barry Popik. Barry Popik is an American etymologist who is recognized as an expert on the origins of the terms “Big Apple”, “Windy City”, and “hot dog”. He is a consulting editor of the Oxford

Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America and was described in The Wall Street Journal as “the restless genius of American et...”
en.wikipedia.org

In his letter to the Romans, written 1800 years later, Paul wrote of Abraham’s struggle with belief:

“¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. ²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully persuaded that **God had power to do what he had promised.** ²² **This is why ‘it was credited to him as righteousness.’”**

How do we become worthy of life-heaven?

That woman in Hollywood felt unworthy because she broke certain laws and assumed all other believers faithfully complied.

All the way back to Moses’s time, God compelled Israel to keep the Law.

In churches Norma and I attended in our youth, leaders rightly taught that Jesus freed us from Moses’ Law.

They wrongly taught, however that a New Testament law now replaces OT laws.

Yet, no one could agree on what the NT law is. **That’s why we now see 350+ denominations.** People keep looking for the right church with all the right laws and perfect people attending.

The perfect church doesn’t exist on earth. Yet God’s perfect promise exists and you can bet your life on it.

How do we attain heaven now?

God’s promise to Abraham benefits us all.

Recall God’s Genesis 12: 3 promise to Abram: “*all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*”?

Those “boring” genealogies in the Bible prove Jesus’ direct line from Abraham and Sarah.² **Jesus Christ was born of their family line and only he (Jesus) benefits all the earth.**

² See Mathew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38

As Romans 4 assures us:

“²³ The words ‘**it was credited to him**’ were written not for him (Abraham) alone, ²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”

- If you believe in the Almighty God;
- if you believe that Jesus Christ, His only Son, died on the cross for your mistakes and unworthiness;
- that God raised him from death ,
- and commit and trust your life to Christ and endure with him,
- God credits Jesus’ righteousness to you; (We stand by grace; not because we deserve it).

- God will raise you from death when Christ returns to judge all of us.³

Knowing the above helps us face challenges.



If you know Jesus already won life’s battle, you can take powerful hits and not get discouraged.

You understand that God tests us to strengthen and prepare us, not to defeat us.

“We exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope . . .”

Athletes do not improve their skill unless they face constant challenges in practice.

No athlete becomes strong by living a life of ease and comfort.

³ In no way, do I intend this as a statement of faith or creed; this merely summarizes New Testament teaching as I understand it.

No one is more worthy than another.

No human being stands before God
with credit to his/her name.

To claim otherwise distorts Scripture.

“All our righteous acts are like filthy rags.”

“All have sinned and fall short.”⁴

Consider this great life-news in our text:

“Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

How does this happen?

Look at this in brief steps.

We receive God’s Spirit in baptism.



1980 photo of the Jordan by Bob

When John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, as soon as Jesus came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus as a dove.⁵

Jesus was baptized as an example for us.

⁴ Isaiah 64: 6. Many scholars think this means menstrual rags; & Romans 6:23 NIV

⁵ See Matthew 3:13-17

As Romans 6 informs us, in baptism we unite with Christ in his death and resurrection.

The first day the church existed, the Apostles clearly taught: **“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”** Acts 2:38:

If you think baptism is unnecessary, recall what God’s preacher told the repentant Paul: **“What are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.”⁶**

Paul wrote the churches in Galatia:

“You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”⁷

Being clothed with Christ is another way of saying that God reckons righteousness to us on the basis of our obedient faith.

As you see in verse 29, the Bible connects Abraham’s faith with ours:

⁶ Acts 22:16 NIV

⁷ Galatians 3:

“If you belong to Christ, you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according the promise.”

We began by speaking of God’s promise and the benefits He gives.

When God’s Spirit begins living in us, our bodies become temples of God’s Spirit.

Linking it to subjects we’ve discussed, Paul reminded the Corinthian church of that fact:

“You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”⁸

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”⁹

It matters what we do with our “temple” bodies and where we take them.

These things being true, may I recommend:

- Feed your mind with God’s bread of life.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:11 NIV

⁹ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

If you aren’t used to this “diet” of God’s word, read about 25 New Testament verses a day.

Ask as you read, **“How do this apply to me?”**

God speaks through his Word, feeding us this way.

- Pray briefly asking God’s Word and Spirit to rule over you.
- Ask for His wisdom to guide you.
Not long ago as I did this, I had been feeling the weight of various challenges and was complaining to God.

With clarity, a loving “voice” reassured me: saying: “Bob, you tell the Good News as I assigned you and I’ll take care of these other matters.”

This is one way to discover that God will pour His loving Holy Spirit into your heart.

You will discover peace and joy you have never known before.

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