

There is power in the death of Jesus. There is power in the death of Jesus to transform your financial situation. I'm not talking about the light, superficial prosperity teaching that wafts up from the southwest, not that kind of light stuff. But loved ones, the cross of Jesus crucified the world -- all this twisted, perverted world that won't work right -- the cross of Christ crucified that, and we will triumph by the power of that cross; that's how you and I will change things in this world. And if all we've got is the literature of this fellowship, or our little musical review or drama, or our little diagrams of spirit, soul and body, we are, of all men, most of to be pitied; we'll do nothing in the world.

But if we really do grasp what God did in his son Jesus on the cross of Calvary, and we begin to live in the absolute faith and confidence that that has already taken place, then we will see the power of the sign of that cross. We will see it transform living situations that you find yourself in like marital situations and professional situations that you find yourself in -- the power of God's Spirit will be released in response to your faith. So you will find yourself an old broken man of 99 and God is saying that "I'm going to make you a father of many nations." And you'll look at your old wife who is 89 and you'll think, "No way!" Except that God was good enough to preach the gospel to Abraham -- do you remember that? It says that in Galatians if you'll look at it. It might be good to see the way God made fun of time right there; Galatians 3:8, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.' So then those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith."

So Abraham had faith back there, in the same gospel as we have, and if you ever doubt that just check again in John 8:56. If you are ever uncertain whether Abraham knew about the cross of Jesus, read John 8:56, "'Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad'. The Jews then said to him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.'" Jesus says "Before Abraham was ever born, I was in existence." There is another one in I Peter 1:20 and it's just a variation on that famous verse in Revelation 13 isn't it? But this is 1 Peter 1:20, verse 19 will give you the context. "but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of times for your sake." And that ties in with that verse in Revelation, chapter 8, I think, which says that Jesus was the lamb slain before the foundation of the world. And that ties up with the very beginning of the fall in Genesis 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he" the seed of the woman, "shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel."

So God is saying "he, the seed of the woman, my son Jesus, who will be born of a woman, he will bruise your head. He will destroy you and put you under his feet. You shall bruise his heel; he will be wounded and he will bear pain on Calvary for it."

In other words, God looked at the whole of history and solved it in a moment by putting it all in his son and destroying it there and crucifying it. That's why Paul says, "I glory in nothing except

the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world." And that's why Paul, again, says, "The world was reconciled to God in Christ." Because God took the whole of the world with all that's wrong in it and he rectified it in Jesus, and then he sent out people like Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and later the Apostles, to distribute the benefits of that to the world. And we are their successors. We distribute the benefits of that mighty work on Calvary through our faith.

But if you don't have faith in that, you have nothing to give but words and ideology and whatever kind of a good life you live. But you have no power to heal the sick; you have no power to see strongholds of Satan destroyed; you have no power to see your own day to day life transformed. But if you have faith that God actually rectified everything in the world, then by that faith rising in your heart day after day after day, you see things transformed. With him (indicating someone in the audience) and under his instruction, I have learned how to use an IBM computer -- we have a little one. Our monster computer upstairs I don't touch -- we leave it to the experts. But the little IBM we can manage. It is amazing; you can have about 500 figures on the screen and you have to set up mathematical relationships between every figure. But once you have set up those mathematical relationships on, for instance, cash flow; you can change one figure, just one figure out of the 500, and all the rest change accordingly. So it's amazing; you can show yourself with a deficit in the bank of \$100,000. And then you can say, "Now what if we made this kind of profit and you raise your profit from 40 to 50%, then all the figures change and you end up with \$50,000 plus in the bank. The computer just switches everything in the light of this factor you plug in.

God has provided us with a factor like that; it changes everything when you plug it in. Now if we can do that on a silly little computer, with our little knowledge, can you see how easy it is for the mighty Father to have this Cross factor that he has plugged into every situation in our fallen world? And all he requires is for one of us to find out from him what cell he wants to change next. Then we press that button with our faith and it's changed -- that's the power that we have and that's the power that Abraham used when God first said to him when he was 75, "I'll make you a great nation." Then about 11 years later when he was 86 God took him out and said, "Look at the stars in the sky." Because Abraham was getting worried; he said, "Look, I've only got a slave who has a son. This slave's son is going to inherit all my property." God said, "No, look at the stars in the sky. Now if you can number them, that's how many your descendants are going to be." That was when Abraham was 86. Then at age 99, 13 years later -- because God wanted to make it very clear that this was by the cross that he was doing this -- it wasn't any natural ability that Abraham had. Ninety-nine, 13 years later, really 24 years after the original promise, God came to Abraham again and said, "I have already made you the father of many nations." He didn't say, "I will make you" he said, "I have already made you." And he meant that because he had already done it in Christ. He had already taken Sarah's old 89 year old body and womb and put it in his son Jesus and called into existence the things that do not exist. So he said to Abraham, "I have made you the father of many nations already. It's done. Just accept it."

Two months ago, you all don't know it, but two months ago we had got ourselves into financial difficulties in our businesses -- we were in some difficulty, to put it mildly. And we saw that God had transformed all this in Jesus, that all this had been crucified in him and made new in him and that it was already done, and we began to believe that and then we got hard to work and we worked like Trojans, I think, night and day. Two months later, the thing was utterly transformed. It came home to us in a meeting in one of the restaurants just last week; God saw the end from the beginning. God saw it as it is now, relatively, a beautiful picture, with peace in the valley. God saw all that from the beginning so he was never worried, he was never sweating it out; he had it all

already done in Jesus. So it is with your marriage, so with your sickness, so with your life, so with your future, so with your particular commission he has given to you; it's already done in him and he has great peace in his heart and great rest. And the moment you begin to have that too he is able to show you what he has changed and what he wants to manifest as changed, in this time-space world. That's it. But you do have to come into that faith. You have to come into that rest and that peace that God has done all this.

Let me show you something, loved ones, in Abraham's experience that may help to light things up for you about this very truth. In Genesis 17:4, when Abraham is 99, God says this, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations." Not just "exalted father" but "father of the multitude." So God says, "My covenant is with you." Which covenant? Oh, the covenant of faith that he completed back in Genesis 15:5, "And he brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness." That was the covenant of faith and that was; God was pleased with Abraham because he believed that; that's the covenant that God is referring to.

Now he made another covenant with him in Genesis 17:9, "And God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your descendants after you; every male among you shall be circumcised.'" This is called the covenant of circumcision; it's simply a sign of the original covenant of faith -- that's all it is. The covenant of faith is the basic covenant that God has made with all of us; that he tried to make with us in the Garden of Eden when he said, "Trust the tree of life; it will provide everything for you. The power of my Holy Spirit will give you all that you need." It was the original covenant, the covenant of faith. This covenant of circumcision was just a sign of that in verse 11, "Every male among you shall be circumcised. "You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He that is eight days among you shall be circumcised; every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house, or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, both he that is born in your house and he that is bought with your money, shall be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

It was a sign. The Jews took the sign and became preoccupied with the sign. If you doubt that at all, look at Romans 4:1 where God interprets it all to us. It's so good that we can hear what Paul was inspired to write as he read what we have just read in Genesis 17. Romans 4:1-15, "What then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' Now to one who works, his wages are not reckoned as a gift but as his due. And to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness. So also David pronounces a blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not reckon his sin.'

Is this blessing pronounced only upon the circumcised, or also upon the uncircumcised? We say that faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or

after he had been circumcised?" Well, we know it was 13 years before, when he was 86. "It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received circumcision as a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believed without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, and likewise the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but also follow the example of the faith which our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world, did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but whether there is no law, there is no transgression."

In other words, think of it; what made Abraham right with God? Was it the circumcision? Or was it the fact that he really did believe God when God pointed to the stars of the sky and said, "So shall your descendants be; I have made them so in my son Jesus." Well, you know when it was -- it was when he exercised faith; that's when God was pleased with him. The circumcision was just a sign that God gave to Abraham and his particular physical descendants at that time. But the Jewish loved ones did not treat it as that; they glorified the sign and they specialized in the sign and they made a big thing of this circumcision. They elevated it and forgot completely the thing that this was just a sign of. And so for years they have lost all that God had for them.

But so with us -- so with us: Romans 4:23, "But the words, 'it was reckoned to him,' were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification." So we take that event in 29 A.D. and we say, "You should have died for your sins, but Jesus died for you; believe that and it will be reckoned to you as righteousness." And poor wee souls that we are, we say, "I believe that. I believe that Jesus died for me, therefore I believe that God has forgiven my sins; that's the purpose of the death of Christ." Well, that the Jews knew -- the Jews knew that that their sins were forgiven. The whole purpose of the cross of Jesus is that in it, God put everything right that is wrong in you and me, and everything right that is wrong in our part of the world in which we live. And as we exercise faith in that, and see that manifesting itself in time and space and see things changed; money provided, conversions taking place, sicknesses healed, so God is glorified. And God reckons our faith to us -- it is righteousness. He says, "Good, trust me, my people -- you are trusting me to change the world as you walk through it."

Our faith makes us right with God. That's, loved ones, how "the just live by faith" --in a practical exercise of our faith in the mighty changing that God has wrought in Calvary, not just in the narrow forensic, algebraic equation, "Christ died for you, therefore, you have your sins forgiven." No. You know how dry and dead that narrow evangelical concept can be and it can also be almost a mental concept, can't it? It can; I don't know how you all think. How do you think you are saved? Well, so many of us think, "I'm saved because I believe what it says there; I believe that Jesus died for my sins, therefore I won't have to die, therefore, God has forgiven me, that's it." And I used to try to struggle over that and I thought, "How can I for the rest of my life get satisfaction just out of that little logical statement?" And I used to wonder, "How can you rejoice and rejoice everyday just in that little equation?"

Of course, that's not what real saints rejoice in. Real saints rejoice in the fact not simply that their sins are forgiven, but that in Jesus' death, the whole world has been crucified to us and we have been crucified to the world, and everything wrong in us has been put right in Christ and as we

believe that, we see those things manifested day by day. So we face a fit of temper, and we realize, "Father, you have put that temper into your son Jesus and you changed it and transformed it. Lord, I believe that and I am going to continue to believe that and live in the belief of that in my heart until that is manifested in time and space." And God tells you, "Your mum, who has not converted, I included her in my son's death. I destroyed her and raised her up. Now praise me and thank me. Always see her as one who has already been raised up in my son. See her through the eyes of faith. Love is always eager to believe the best. Walk that way with a heart that is bounding and exhilarating in that confidence. And if you do that, that's all I'm asking you to do. Walk in faith. It's up to me to distribute the benefits of that atonement, but I can't do it at all unless you have faith in it."

And that's how "the just walk by faith." In other words, for people like ourselves, there are no depressing situations, there are no failed situations. If you are looking forward to something that you are fearing a little this week, maybe a difficult relationship in your office, or maybe some financial situation that you can't see your way through, immediately rejoice and again I will say rejoice. See that that, too, was taken by God, foreseen by him as turning up in your life, taken by him, put into his son, wiped out and remade the way he wanted it originally. So go forward into this week confident of that and joyous about it; fully expecting it to be rectified in time and space. That is how "the just live by faith."

But do you see -- the evangelical world has done the same thing as the dear Jews; we have gone after a sign. We have gone after a sign and we've taken a very tiny little slice of what Jesus' death brought for us and we've majored in that. We run around writing all our hymns, poor souls that we are, about the old covenant, about the forgiveness of our sins, and here God has laid Satan at his feet. Here God has destroyed all kinds of things in our world that trouble us day by day and here we are, saying our sins are forgiven and trying to carry the world on our back for Jesus.

That's what we do. We say, "Oh, our sins are forgiven by faith in Christ, but I have to struggle with these finances myself, that's what I have to do. That's what God has put me here to do. He's put me here to evangelize the University of Minnesota, so I'm going to try to do it. He's put me here to overcome my financial difficulty, that's what I am going to try to do." And God is saying, "My child, I love you more than that; I foresaw those things that you are facing and there's an easier way to deal with it. I've dealt with it in my son. When my word says, I reconciled the world to myself, it means I reconciled the whole world to myself; I put it all right. When those dear servants of mine came to the man who was lame from birth at the gate beautiful of the temple and said, 'In the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk,' they were saying 'in the name of Jesus Christ' because they knew that man had already been raised up in my son, the lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. They were saying something that they already knew and I had whispered to them, 'Now is the time to do it. I did it centuries before, but I wanted it manifested now.'" That's why they spoke with such certainty; they regarded these things as already done.

That's why faith is complete confidence that the thing has already been done. Faith is not just hoping or trying to believe that God will do it. Faith is absolute confidence that it has been done. Now if you say to me, "Do you mean I just pick any difficulty out?" Loved ones, you pick all difficulties out and you go in absolute confidence towards them, with absolute joy that God has already dealt with them, then he is able to show you exactly how he'll deal with them. But you go in absolute confidence that he has dealt with them. Say you have a financial difficulty; there are several ways to deal with a financial difficulty if you think about it. Somebody can send you money. Somebody can increase your salary or somebody can work the payables and receivables right so that

your cash flow falls better than you thought and the bill isn't due exactly when you thought it was, or there is another thing that can be moved. Now God will determine which of those he will do, but one thing he expects you to do; to go forward in that financial difficulty with absolute confidence that he has already dealt with it in his son. If you don't, you're not exercising faith and he is not able to do any great work in your village because of your unbelief. So do you see -- it starts from a position of faith.

You don't need to get into all the agony of "I don't know if he'll heal my mother of cancer or not." You don't have to decide that. All you do have to decide is that you're going to believe God that he crucified the world in his son Jesus, that he healed every sickness in his son Jesus, that he destroyed every sin in his son Jesus, and that he unraveled every financial and professional problem in his son Jesus. That's all you have to believe. You have to cast away fear forever in your life and praise God that he has rectified everything in his son Jesus and walk towards it with a bounding, exhilarating heart. That's what faith is.

Now note; faith isn't, "Yeah, well, I can't sleep tonight. I know God has done it. I know he has taken care of it, but I have difficulty sleeping because I'm facing that guy at work tomorrow." No, that's not faith. Faith is having a good sleep, absolutely confident that God has already solved this problem. Then in that kind of spirit of restful faith, the Holy Spirit whispers to you, "Here's what I want you to do." And you might be tempted to say, "That only makes sense if you have already done this." "Trust me – you do it." Or as the old guy in the camp meeting with me said, "There's a wall ahead in front of you and you have to get over it or get through it. God says, 'Jump' you jump and he'll make the hole." That's it; the Holy Spirit will tell you what to do and it will only make sense if you are in a position of absolute confidence that God has supernaturally dealt with this thing.

So loved ones that's it; it's a miraculous thing. God is such a dear and you'll see that in the rest of this chapter. We'll just read through it because it speaks for itself. But he's such a kind, dear Father that he will be kind to us as we begin to live this way.

Genesis 17:15, "And God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her; I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations, kings of peoples shall come from her.' Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, 'Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?'" And you can see the way God dealt with him that this was not the cynical laugh of unbelief, but it was just joy that this could really happen – "surely it couldn't!" And then you can tell by what he said next what he thought when he went in to Hagar.

It wasn't such a deliberate sin that he obviously did because he says, "And Abraham said to God, 'O that Ishmael might live in my sight!'" Or "Would it not be a little easier, Lord, if you just did it through Ishmael?" Obviously, he still didn't feel that he had rebelled against God back in his dealings with Hagar. It seems like it to us, in those almost pre-ethical days, but obviously you see the connection in Genesis 15:3, "And Abram said, 'Behold thou has given me no offspring; and a slave born in my house will be my heir.'" And then in verse 4 of Chapter 15, "And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, 'This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir.'"

It was easy, when Sarah spoke to Abraham, in the next chapter, Genesis 16:1, "Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar; and Sarai said to Abram, 'Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children;

go into my maid; it may be I shall obtain children by her.'" And it was easy for Abraham, I think, to presume, "Well, so it will be my son, it won't be by Sarai, but it will be my son." He obviously didn't feel, until he saw the way things were turning out between Sarai and Hagar, that the thing was desperately wrong. Obviously that's what he felt when he said in Genesis 17:18, "Abraham said to God, 'Oh, that Ishmael might live in thy sight.'"

God is so dear; he will talk with us and he will talk with you. He doesn't strike him down and say, "Don't say such a thing to me." Verse 19, "God said, 'No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.'" Kind of a joke because "Isaac" means "laughter" in Hebrew! God was kind and it was as if he was saying; "Yeah, I heard you laughing, okay -- we'll call him "laughter." "I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you." God is so kind; he says simply, "I've heard you; what you did with Hagar wasn't my will, but I have heard you asking about Ishmael. I'm not going to establish my covenant with him, but I will tell you this. "As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him and make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year.'" That's all kind of homey and friendly.

God is like that with us, you know; he has done a mighty work in Jesus, but he is so ready to explain it to us, and so ready to work with us. Actually, if you will take God seriously and take honestly, for real, what he has done in Jesus on Calvary, you will find that he will show you great understanding and great forbearance. There seems a deep way in which, it's hard to define exactly, in which somehow God takes into consideration the things you think and the things that you ask. Maybe he shouldn't for such silly people, but he seems to. When you bring up Ishmael, he seems to recognize that. He can't deal with you if you are rebellious and you're going to have your own way whatever, but he seems to be willing to talk things over with us, to work things into his major plan in our lives.

Verse 22, "When he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham. Then Abraham took Ishmael, his son and all the slaves born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael, his son, was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised; and all the men of his house, those born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

The meaning of circumcision is in Romans 10:8. Let's look first at Romans 2:28, "For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew that is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal. His praise is not from men, but from God." So real circumcision is the circumcision of the heart where the old dead heart is cut away until you have a clean, pure heart and the old nature is cut away.

And that's what you find there in Romans 10:8. "But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith that we preach); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved."

It's in your heart that you live in faith. So as you look forward to this week, God looks at your heart and if it's a heart that is filled with fear and apprehension, then God knows you don't trust him, and God knows that you don't really believe that he has dealt with everything in his son Jesus on Calvary, and God is limited to what he can do in your life. And really, you have to just say it; he isn't pleased with you because he knows you're going to try to slog through this week on your own, by your own efforts. But if he looks down into your heart and he sees -- oh, there's a beautiful line in an English poem, River Brooke, and it ends, "And gentleness in hearts at peace under an English heaven."

If God looks down and sees "gentleness in a heart at peace," then he is pleased and he sees the travail of his son's soul and he is satisfied. Because he knows his children are going into this coming week knowing that he has already lowered every mountain and filled every valley. And that's, believe it or not, what he most wants; he most wants the joy of a father looking upon children who trust him and who really do believe that he has provided all of they're needs this coming week.

Loved ones, that's how we are justified by our faith. That's how we're right with God; because we trust him for what he has already done on Calvary's cross. With this, there is nothing we cannot do. This group here tonight, there is nothing that he cannot do. Why -- because there is nothing that God has not already done. There is nothing that has happened in this fallen world that God has not already rectified in his son and he's looking for a group of men and women who will walk forward in that faith; they will see the walls of Jericho coming down and those old 89 year old ladies having babies.

Let us pray.

Dear Father, we thank you that you and your dear son Jesus are the same yesterday, today and forever. We thank you Father that what you did for Abraham you have done for all of us. There is not a thing that we will need this coming week that you have not already solved, disentangled, and unraveled.

Father, we thank you for that. So we will, deep down, put our hearts at peace. We would rest, our Father, we would rest from our labors and trust you that you have done all things well.

And now Lord we are going into this week to live and act and speak in that confidence; to do things that will only make sense if that is true. So Father we go forward with no fear befalling us because we have absolute confidence that you have kept your word that all things have already been reconciled by the blood of the cross.

I thank you Father.

We pray for each other this week, especially in those moments when Satan tries to push us off balance and tries to panic us. Lord we remember that verse in Galatians that the world has been crucified to us and that you have disarmed the principalities and powers and made a triumph over them. Lord, we thank you for that. We look forward to this week with joy and delight and we cast away forever all fear and apprehension and anxiety because we know the just will live by faith.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and evermore. Amen.