



## ***St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)***

**Worship Address :** Cerritos High School Auditorium  
12500 E. 183<sup>rd</sup> St., Cerritos, CA 90703  
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

**Mailing Address :** 11428 E. Artesia Blvd. # 4 ; Artesia, CA 90701  
562-924-5051

**Website :** [www.sp-ecc.org](http://www.sp-ecc.org)

February 21, 2010

**Theme: God Is Faithful to His Promises**

**Text: Romans 4:18-21**

The Scriptures are clear that God is faithful to His promises. In this passage from Romans, the Apostle Paul points to Abraham as a person who against all hope believed. He points to Abraham as a man who had unwavering faith. Paul speaks of Abraham in glowing terms as the model of faith for all who truly believe. I call this "The Strange Case of Father Abraham." Why would I do that? In order to understand what I mean we need to look more closely at the story of God's dealings with Abraham.

When we first see God dealing with Abram, God commands him to make a move that requires great faith. God commands Abram to leave his family behind and to go to the land which He would show him. Here Abraham exercises great faith. He does what God tells him to do. He trusted God to lead him when he didn't even know where he was going. Our lives are like that in many ways. We are all traveling into an unknown future. The only choice that we have about this unknown journey is whether to go there in faith trusting God, or to go there trusting ourselves. Paul says that Abraham had faith and hope. Faith is the choice to trust God in the present moment. Hope is faith pointed toward the future. Hope is the assured expectation that God will be with us in the future just as He has been with us in the past and just as He is with us now, in the present.

The next time we find God dealing personally with Abram, He makes a promise to protect and bless him. But Abram whines that he doesn't have an heir for his estate. God responds to Abram's whining by promising to give him a son and many descendents as well. The Scriptures then say this about Abraham: "Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness." So far so good. God has asked Abram for a deep level of trust and Abram trusts. God promises him a son, he believes. So far his faith has not wavered.

However, the next time we find God dealing with Abram he is ninety-nine years old. Several things happen in this chapter. (1) The Lord appears to Abraham and says, "I am God Almighty, walk before me and be blameless." (2) God promises Abram that he will be the father of many nations. (3) God changes his name to Abraham which means, "father of many." (4) God promises to be God both to Abraham and to his descendents. (5) God commands Abraham to circumcise all the males in his household. So far so good.

But then God slips Abraham a zinger. He promises Abraham that He is going to give him a son through Sarah his wife. When God made this promise both Sarah and Abraham were old people. They were both way beyond the childbearing stage of life. It is here that Abraham's faith zigzags a bit. What is Abraham's response to this promise of God? He



***St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)***

**Worship Address :** Cerritos High School Auditorium  
12500 E. 183<sup>rd</sup> St., Cerritos, CA 90703  
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

**Mailing Address :** 11428 E. Artesia Blvd. # 4 ; Artesia, CA 90701  
562-924-5051

**Website :** [www.sp-ecc.org](http://www.sp-ecc.org)

laughs. Abraham's laughter does not seem to be unwavering faith. But God does not zap Abraham with a bolt of lightning. Instead He keeps on speaking to him about this promise. He even gives Abraham a name for the boy that will be born—Isaac. Guess what the name Isaac means—"He laughs."

So how can Paul say that Abraham had unwavering faith? The answer is found in what Abraham does after the laughter. He keeps on listening to God who promises to make his covenant with Sarah's son. He promises that Sarah will have a son in about a year. What Abraham does next is revealing. He obeys God's command to circumcise his household. Scripture says, "On that very day, Abraham took...every male in his household and circumcised them." The secret to Abraham's faith was that he didn't stop listening to God. The more he listened, the more he believed—and he believed to the point of obedience. If we have problems with doubt, part of the solution to that problem is to keep on listening to God's Word. God's Word is a living thing. It has the power to create faith in our hearts.

Next week we will look at some of the many promises that God has made to us in His Word. For now, I want to point out two of them: (1) God promises that when we place our trust in Jesus, the Holy Spirit of God comes to live in our physical bodies. This is God's promise and he keeps it. This alone should boggle our minds and fire us up! God the Holy Spirit, who is greater than any force of evil, lives in our physical bodies. (2) A second promise that God makes to everyone who believes is to "justify" them by faith. In a nutshell, this means that God declares us righteous and promises to treat us as though we were as sinless as Jesus Himself. This means that another promise of God is true for every genuine believer in Jesus Christ: "There is therefore, now, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."