**Romans 4:16-25**

Introduction

I. Last week we discussed that we are justified by faith, not works

II. This week we focus on faith: what it is and what it looks like to live by faith

The Passage

I. The story of Abraham

A. God promised Abraham many descendants and he confirmed the promise over 25 years (see Genesis 12:1-3, 15:1-6, 17:3-6, and 21:1-2)

B. Yet Abraham had to wait 25 years to see the promise fulfilled

II. Paul’s comments regarding Abraham’s faith (Romans 4:18-21)

A. Abraham believed “against all hope” (v. 18)

 1. As Abraham looked at his circumstances, all he saw was death (v. 19)

 2. There was no hope, humanly speaking

 B. Abraham believed “in hope” (v. 20-21)

 1. He believed that God was fully able to do what he promised (v. 21)

2. He believed in the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were (v. 17)

God’s object lesson of showing Abraham the stars may have been what helped Abraham recognize God as the all-powerful creator

III. Faith is clinging to God’s promises no matter what the circumstances

 A. The opposite of faith is not reason

 It is always reasonable to trust someone who is completely trustworthy

B. The opposite of faith is sight

1. Hebrews 11:1: faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see

2. Faith = trusting in what we can’t see. It’s choosing to base our lives NOT on our circumstances which we can see, but rather on God’s promises which we can’t always see so clearly

 3. John Stott: “Faith always looks at the problems in light of the promises”

 C. Analogy: A crack in the windshield.

1. Do we focus on the cracks in the windshield (the problems and circumstances of our lives) or do we focus on the horizon in front of us (God’s promises)

 2. Faith = seeing beyond our circumstances to God’s faithful promises

3. The danger is that we lose sight of God’s promises and get too focused on our circumstances and seek solutions to our circumstances that are not obedient responses of faith (ala Abraham and Sarah and Hagar in Genesis 16)

IV. Live in light of God’s promises: past, present, future

A. Trust that God raised Jesus from the dead (v. 23-2)

 We trust it even though we didn’t see it

B. Trust in God’s promises regarding who we are in Christ

= we are righteousness (v. 24), holy, blameless, there is no condemnation

 We trust it even though what we see is our sin and inadequacies

C. Trust in God’s promise that He will work all things for our good (Romans 8:28)

1. Disclaimer: this is only a promise for believers, and it’s not a promise for our comfort or pleasure, but a promise for our good (= making us more and more like Jesus)

 2. Poem: “It’s rigged and everything in your favor”

a. We can trust that the universe is rigged in our favor because the God who orchestrates the universe will orchestrate it for our ultimate good

b. How would you face the future differently if you truly trusted that every single event/circumstance will ultimately work out for your ultimate/eternal good?

**Discussion Questions**

1. What did you think of the idea that the opposite of faith isn’t reason, but rather the opposite of faith is sight? Do you come across many people who think otherwise?

2. As you consider the promises of Scripture, what particular promise do you need to focus on and cling to at this time in your life, and why?

3. Consider Sunday’s car analogy. What habits, ideas, or perspectives help you most to focus on the horizon rather than the windshield?

4. If you lived life firmly believing that God would truly work every single upcoming event for your good, how would you live differently? What would you do more of and what would you do less of?