



**13 The Culmination**  
**Romans 3:27-31, 4:1-16**  
**Courage Church, Detroit, MI.**  
**Sunday April 14, 2019**

People need hope... so many people feel hopeless.

Like nothing will ever change... it won't get better... when they hear good news (any good news, not just the Gospel), it sort of just bounces off of them because for many people, they are so used to

things being so miserable that they have lost faith in any idea that it can be anything other than what it is.

That is why every week we take some time and pray for one another... for the situations that seem impossible. We pray for the reconciliation of marriages, we pray for healing even when the doctors report says that healing is impossible... we believe we serve a God who is not bound by human boundaries... who is not intimidated by our anger... who does not give up on us when we question Him or take matters into our own hands and make things worse.

We believe that "impossible" is fertile soil for God.

This morning we are going to read a pretty extensive section of scripture. And in it, Paul is giving a bit of a commentary... a bit of an explanation... of Genesis 15.

In Hebrew culture, in around the second century (so AFTER Romans was written) the rabbi's came up with something called Midrash... it was a commentary on the Hebrew scriptures... but it was more than just a question of "what is this saying?" but it also was the question of "what is this saying to US" - for us today? It was said that (Karen Armstrong, the Bible, pg 82) any text that could not be interpreted to meet the needs of the current day... TODAY... it was dead." - and that is not to say that any of it is

dead... but more so, to say that ALL OF IT *is alive*... and we need to figure out what this is saying that will help us today.

Romans 4 would have been an example for what a Midrash would one day look like... it is Paul, placing us in the story of Abraham... its Paul placing his hearers living in the church of Rome... this church of both JEWS AND GENTILES (who were struggling to get along) - *into* the story of Abraham.

into the story of his wife Sarah... and the impossible promises of God that were given to them.

It is a story about hope... its a story about love. It is a story about doubt, and taking matters into your own hands AND GOD STILL SHOWING UP ANYWAY.

It's the story of me. It's the story of you. And what God wants to do in me and do in you and even more importantly DO IN US... His people... despite all of our shortcomings... failures... losses... and disappointments.

We will read through quite a bit of it today, and the rest next week, but we won't have time to go through line by line like we did with the section last week. Today we are going to do our best to capture the heart of all of this and set us up for what will happen next week.

### **Romans 3:27-31, 4:1-16 -**

<sup>27</sup> Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup> For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. <sup>29</sup> Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, <sup>30</sup> since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. <sup>31</sup> Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

### **Abraham Justified by Faith**

**4** What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? <sup>2</sup> For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup> For what does the Scripture say?

**“Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”**

<sup>4</sup> Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. <sup>5</sup> And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, <sup>6</sup> just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

<sup>7</sup> “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,  
and whose sins are covered;

<sup>8</sup> blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

<sup>9</sup> Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. <sup>10</sup> How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. <sup>11</sup> He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, <sup>12</sup> and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

### **The Promise Realized Through Faith**

<sup>13</sup> **For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.** <sup>14</sup> **For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.** <sup>15</sup> For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

<sup>16</sup> That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

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Last week we pointed out the way Paul builds an argument throughout the first three chapters of his letter about how man has not been faithful to God, but how God has still been faithful to man.

And from Romans 3:21 all the way through until the end of Romans chapter 4, what we find is not simply a message about how God has forgiven us of our sins... He has done that! But the message that we get here is not only that, but also that God truly has done all that He promised He would do... He was faithful to His promise to Abraham. He was faithful to His promise to Israel.

He has rescued us. Delivered us and even REDEEMED US.

There have been two pretty big key words the last few weeks... Last week the word was REDEMPTION. We have been redeemed... God has actually, through Jesus, done something that has put us back to where He intended us to be...

and the second word is JUSTIFICATION. Which means “to be declared righteous” - It means that, because of Jesus, God is able to look at you and declare that you are righteous.

Now, Paul shifts his focus just a little, to show us HOW God has done this for so many others... and how He in fact will do it for us... and the key word is FAITH.

In 3:27, Paul says that a law of works will get you no-where, but rather, a law of FAITH. A law of works will do nothing more than demonstrate for you your inability to keep it... and if by that law you are judged, then you and I are in a world of trouble... but what Paul tells us is that if you have faith in JESUS, then you will be justified because you will be judged according to Him.

But in verse 30 he says something that would have meant A LOT to his readers, though today it may seem insignificant to us.

He says that the God will justify the circumcised by faith, and He will justify the uncircumcised through faith.

These Greek words are a bit different... “by” (*ek*) faith the circumcised will be saved, and THROUGH (*dia*) THE SAME FAITH... will also the uncircumcised be saved. Through the promise that the Jews were given initially... now the whole world has access.

He says “the process by which Jesus justifies you looks the same, no matter who you are, where you are from, what culture you were raised in, or even what laws you have or have not kept.”

We talked about circumcision a bit a few weeks back, it was an identifier for the Jews that they are set apart for God... it was very important in their culture.

which makes this a huge statement. Because what it is saying is not that circumcision is bad, nor is it good. What it is saying is that God will meet the uncircumcised where they are, and the circumcised where they are... and if they have faith, He will justify them.

See, Paul talks a lot about diversity... obviously here he is writing to a very diverse church and in all likelihood they weren't all that happy about it...

but He talks about Jews and Gentiles... circumcised and uncircumcised... male and female... and he makes these types of statements, like “In Christ, there is no Jew and Gentile. There is no male and female”

but obviously when you become a Christian... you are still a male or a female... you are still a part of whatever family you are a part of... you are still Jewish or not... the point is not to abandon the parts of you that make you different... the point is that God meets you in those differences and actually wants to leave you in some of them...

if God thought circumcision was important for EVERYONE... He would have met them all right as they are... then convicted them all to get circumcised... HE DIDN'T.

BUT... if he thought that circumcision was NOT IMPORTANT FOR ANYONE... he would have just thrown the whole thing out. For Abraham,

God gave him circumcision as a SIGN of the covenant that He made with Him... But Paul is very very clear about this... God JUSTIFIED ABRAHAM BEFORE HE GAVE HIM THAT SIGN, and the reason that He did that was to show that God is the justifier of EVERYONE. If He had justified Abraham after the circumcision, it would have been as if that was required for God to work in his life, which is what SO MANY BELIEVED.

Abraham was counted to be righteous BEFORE his circumcision... the implications of that are phenomenal, and the reason for it is even bigger.

We get the reason right there in the very next verse.

the purpose for that was that he would ALSO be the Father of those who are NOT CIRCUMCISED.

What that means is that the family that God created... whom Abraham is the Father of... who God ultimately will use to change the whole world...

is full of a lot of different people who look different from each other, are taught different things than each other... live in different neighborhoods and have different social status's - some have money, some rely on the generosity of others for the next meal. Some are Jews, some are Gentiles. Some are black, some are white.

God knows, that our differences are beautiful... BUT THEY DO NOT DEFINE US... (our identity is found in that we are all image bearers of the same God... bought by the same blood of Jesus who loves us so much that he laid down his life for us) our differences don't define us but they do equip us to do something DIFFERENT than perhaps someone else could do who doesn't have the upbringing you have...

the cultural background you have... the education you have... for some, it's college... for others, its the streets... for others, its a mentor... and all of our minds are shaped in different ways which means that in the body of Christ ALL OF US HAVE DIFFERENT THINGS THAT WE BRING TO THE TABLE.

People who speak a certain language are going to be more affective in reaching the people who speak that language. That is why we talked, at the very beginning of this series, about how Paul was Saul when he was with the Hebrews, and Paul when he was with the Greeks. The name means the same thing, but it was how you said it in two different languages. He says it like this in 1 Corinthians 9:22 - "I became ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE that I may help to save some of them." - Paul was able to be both Paul AND SAUL, because he was a Roman citizen who was raised Jewish and grew up to be a Pharisee...

but for you and I, if we are going to truly have a chance of REACHING ALL PEOPLE... we need to come together and let IT BE OUR DIFFERENCES AMONG US that are used as a way to usher different people who are in different places in life... INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

We celebrate diversity, and not only embrace it but should be intentional to cultivate it and cultivate environments that endorse it.

In fact, I love that in this passage, Paul actually throws in a reference to *echad*. - Romans 3:30 - since God is one!

This phrase "God is one" is a very important one... anytime a Jewish audience would have heard this phrase their minds would go straight to Deuteronomy 6 and the SHEMA. "hear oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is ONE" - its the word "*echad*" - we talked about this... it is the plural one... it is one as in "unified"

IT IS UNITY IN THE MIDST OF DIVERSITY.

in the SHEMA it describes God... He is one, but He is more than one... He is Father. He is Son. He is Spirit. And all of it matters...

it was no accident that Paul drops this little quote in here... God is *echad* - while explaining that God justifies His church IN THE THINGS THAT MAKE THEM DIFFERENT.

"oh you have been circumcised... but you have faith in Jesus? I DECLARE YOU RIGHTEOUS!"

“oh, you have never been circumcised... that doesn't really matter... do you have faith in Jesus?” I DECLARE YOU RIGHTEOUS.

you have college degree? Righteous!

you have a GED? Righteous!

You dropped out of school in second grade to help at home when dad took off? Righteous!

you dropped out of school in 7th grade just because you were sick of it and wanted to quit everything... but today you have come to faith that Jesus Christ has not ruled you out, but loved you so much that HE DIED FOR YOU... RIGHTEOUS.

Broken home? Broken family? Righteous!

Wealthy home? put together family? Righteous!

Wealthy home? but broken family who has the image of everything together but at the end of the day you cry yourself to sleep every night because all the money in the world doesn't stop the fighting... it doesn't stop the pain... it doesn't fix the problems...

but do you believe THAT JESUS wants to bring salvation to your life and to your home today?

THEN I DECLARE THAT YOU ARE RIGHTEOUS.

But *echad* is NOT just diversity. *echad* is UNITY in the middle of DIVERSITY... and what Paul says is that the one thing that brings all of these different people together is that they are all justified when they have FAITH IN JESUS.

So we can be different in EVERY SINGLE WAY besides one... and yet this one thing is powerful enough to BRING US ALL TOGETHER. and that one thing is faith. And as we look a bit closer at what Paul says in chapter 4, we see that it really is true... we are NOT all supposed to be the same. But the same blood of the lamb is enough to cover us all, right where we are.



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In Romans 4:3, Paul quotes one of the most famous passages in the Bible... and then really, the rest of chapter 4 is him sorting out what this verse means... what it meant for Abraham, what it meant for Israel, and what it means for the rest of the world. And we will take two weeks to do this...

but the verse that he quotes is Genesis 15:6, which says:

“he (Abraham) believed the Lord, and he (God) counted it to him as righteousness.”

So first, it is very important to understand the story of Abraham to know what He believed about God and what God was going to do. I will try and walk through it a bit for you...

First God told Abraham to leave his homeland... he promised Abraham a land called Canaan.

Abraham and his wife Sarah had no children, and they were very old...

but God made another promise to Abraham, not only that he would have a child... but that he himself would be the Father of MANY NATIONS. a huge huge huge promise for an old man with a barren wife.

God took Abraham outside, and he showed him the stars. And he said “can you count the stars? - “of course not”

What is God doing? He is showing Abraham his glory... we talked about this earlier in the series, when people would look up to heaven and see the stars and how many there are, they would be overwhelmed... because it was evidence of how great God is and how small we are...

But God tells Abraham - I AM GOING TO DO SOMETHING SO BIG with you... I AM GOING TO USE YOU TO FULFILL THAT CULTURAL MANDATE... to be fruitful and multiply... to fill the entire earth with THE GLORY OF GOD.

God says: in the same way that you can't number them, because there are countless stars... so shall your offspring be."

You childless old man... It won't stay this way forever... you will have a son... and you will be a center piece in how I write history. You will not be forgotten... great things will come from you...

And that is what leads to Genesis 15:6... even though what God told Abraham was basically impossible, Abraham believed God... and the fact that Abraham believed that God would do what He said that He would do... that was counted to Abraham as RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The word "counted" Paul actually uses several times in this passage, and it is important to understand what he was saying with it.

- its more than just "God considers" you righteous now... no... this really is another term explaining justification in a slightly different way... it should be viewed like this "God put in your account the righteousness of Jesus"

When you have faith in Jesus... in what He did on the cross when He died for you... when we have faith that HIS BLOOD is enough for us... what God does is He takes the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS and He places that IN YOUR ACCOUNT.

That is what it is saying... you may think "my account is empty - I have done so many things wrong... its drained... its spent... its hopeless...

look to Jesus... and let Him make the biggest deposit you have ever been given into that account... HE AND HE ALONE WILL MAKE YOU RIGHTEOUS.

and the Devil works in lies... He wants to get in your mind, even after you are saved... Even after you are declared righteous.. and he will try and convince you that you aren't. He will try to convince you that the things that you have done have drained that account... and because of that, you may not always feel like you are righteous.

I love the way that I heard Pastor Kevin say this... He said "if you are a poor... and you live your whole life poor, and then one day someone puts a million dollars in your account" - the next day, you may still feel poor... but you aren't. You actually have a million dollars in your account."  
RIGHT???!!!??? How you feel doesn't change who you are in Christ.

And now, you can decide... DO I LIVE LIKE MY LIFE HAS BEEN CHANGED? Do I start to be generous because obviously I have something to be generous with? Do I take care of myself better now that I have a way to do that?

I have read an awful lot of stories, and I am sure you have too... of people who received an inheritance... and didn't even know it... and they lived their whole lives NOT EVEN KNOWING that their accounts were full... that they could be anything that they wanted... and do anything that they wanted... but they never even knew.

I have even read about people who became homeless.. and lost their families... and the whole time, while everything in their whole worlds fell apart... they never knew what was in their account.

There are two very significant things that we need to point out in this reading, and next week we will continue on Abraham and how this relates to the Resurrection... but from this set of scriptures there are two things we must not miss and both of them lead to other things that are crucial:

First, when you work and are paid a wage for your work, that is not a gift.

This is the very first thing that Paul says after telling us that Abraham himself was justified only by faith. It does NOT go on to say that work is bad... and it does not say that it is bad to earn a wage... in life, work matters... and works matter... if it didn't, the world would be hell because nobody would care for it.

But the point is that, though work does matter, there is no amount of work that you can do that would actually be able to put you into right standing with God... that is why God has to give us A GIFT. 3:24 says that we are justified by his grace AS A GIFT.

Most people want to be successful... they want to be financially stable, and they want to take care of their families and be able to help others. That is awesome and important.

But most people work jobs in which the rate that the work they do is valued at a lower price than what it would ultimately take for them to have the life that they want.

And when you get that paycheck... you don't think "man, this is grace." - you think (hopefully...) "thank you God for the opportunity to have a job, TO EARN ENOUGH TO FEED MY FAMILY AND PAY MY BILLS"

But you know you earned it. And because you know you earned it, IF IT IS NOT ENOUGH there will be a longing for more and more because we are convinced that there is like, some magically number in which we are making enough to find the fulfillment we are looking for...

but when you are in the earning business, and you don't feel like you are earning enough... there will ultimately come a time when you feel like it is insufficient, which will in turn make you feel like YOU are insufficient.

Because you are the earner... because you are judging your worth on what you can or can not produce... that is very dangerous...

if a day DOES comes where your life changes... and you do begin earning a rate that DOES not ONLY pay the bills, but begins to give you the life of your dreams... what will that do to you in your mind?

you took the blame when it wasn't enough... you worked... you were miserable... but you earned what you could and did with it what you needed too...

now... you will take the credit when it is enough... because you earned it.

But Paul says that to one who does not work, but BELIEVES...

he is NOT telling you not to work... He is telling you that all the work in the world won't do it for you... and if you think it will... you are worse off than the person who doesn't work at all but BELIEVES IN JESUS WHO JUSTIFIES THE UNGODLY.

Remember Paul at the very beginning of the exchange in Romans 1:18 begins by framing the entire section with THE UNGODLY. It's the root of many of the sins that he goes on to list that we have been working through for a while now... and here he says "the moment you let God back in... and you believe that Jesus died for you.. even in the middle of the mess of ALL OF THESE THINGS - you are justified."

Christ's righteousness has been added to your account. And you may not always feel righteous... in fact, any time you look at your work and what you have done... its quite possible that you are going to feel like you have fallen short, even after you are declared righteous... but you are justified.

you see... Abraham believed that God truly would do it... That God would give him a child, that God would make him the Father of not just a great nation, but of many nations... God said it... Abraham BELIEVED IT...

except for when He didn't. Because even faithful Abraham had moments in which his faith wavered and the decisions that he made were terrible.

God's covenant with Abraham is given in Genesis 15. It's one of the greatest moments in the entire Bible... we write books about it, we use it to build each other up in the faith and get psyched because God loves us so much that He would take even an old man in his 90s, with a barren wife, and create a family, that would turn into the nations, who would turn back into a unified family that would ultimately facilitate the redemption of the world (the church)

But it is just a few words on the page later, in Genesis 16, that we see Abraham and Sarai employing their servant Hagar, to help God along in the plan. They say "Sarai is barren, Hagar is not - God says a nation will come from our family, so let's have Abraham sleep with Hagar and a family will come from that."

notice this... (this is VERY IMPORTANT) -

they NEVER DID THIS BEFORE. They were previously content just not having children... the dude is old. And suddenly, when God tells them they will have a child... then they go and have him sleep with someone who can actually conceive naturally? come on!

But Abraham decides God needs help... and he sleeps with Hagar, and she conceives... and when she conceives... Sarai begins to look down on her with contempt... she gets bitter... she is angry. She blames Abraham and says that it is on him... And she treats Hagar harshly until Hagar runs away.

But, in the same way that God promised David that the Messiah would come from Him... and David's call was irrevocable even when he slept with Bathsheba...

just like that, God still fulfilled his covenant with Abraham. And Sarai became pregnant... and Isaac was born... who would later Father Jacob... and from that family line would King David and ultimately Christ.

The problem is, now there were two sons... from two mothers... A son of promise, and a son of doubt... of believing that God could do it... just NOT that He could fully do it.

a lot of people live in the realm of Genesis 16. It is where we live. Maybe we aren't sleeping with the mistress... lets hope not... but we live in that place where we believe that we heard from God... we believe Him... but yet we still think that there is something that we can do... and in trying to fulfill the will of God, with a pure heart we train wreck the mission because we put our humanness into it.

it is very significant the way that Paul builds all the way to this moment here in Romans 4, beginning in Romans 1:18-25 when he tells us that humanity has forever been exchanging the truth about God for a lie... we have always subtly been convincing ourselves that we can do it better... that, EVEN IF GOD SAID THAT HE WOULD DO IT... we still need to be the ones to do it.

Listen... God does want to transform your life... He wants to use you... He wants you to want to serve Him... But His yoke is easy and His burden is light... and the GOSPEL MESSAGE has literally nothing to do with anything you do and everything to do with what Jesus did FOR YOU.

IT IS NOT “CHANGE EVERYTHING AND THEN JESUS WILL RESCUE YOU” - NO! The whole point of the rescue is that you need to be rescued... its like if a person were drowning... and we had a boat, and we had a life jacket, and we pulled the boat up next to the poor drowning person saying “learn to swim and then we will send you the life jacket and pull you in to safety”

THAT IS HOW PEOPLE THINK ABOUT JESUS and that is DISGUSTING.

When you realize “Abraham was declared righteous by God himself without CHANGING A THING” you realize... maybe there is hope for me too. and when you realize that even after he was declared righteous, HE STILL DIDN'T ALWAYS ACT RIGHTEOUS... you realize...

okay there DEFINITELY hope for me.

It is not about merit. It is not you and I doing something to earn something.

### **CLOSE:**

There is something very significant that we have to catch when it comes to what Paul says here about faith... He pairs it, both in 3:27 and again in 4:2, against boasting. Actually, Paul talks about boasting pretty consistently throughout the book of Romans. It's something he really seems to be very passionate about.

In 3:27 he says “what becomes of our boasting?” it is excluded... its left at the door. Because boasting comes by the law, and in whether or not you have kept the law. That is why in 4:2, he says that for Abraham, IF HE HAD BEEN JUSTIFIED BY HIS WORKS, it would have given him something to boast about.

But he wasn't, and therefore he does not have anything to boast about.

Boasting, especially in those times, was not so much "bragging" the way that we view it today... it was more of a way to "build yourself up"

- before an army would enter a great battle they would first take the time to boast... to hype themselves up and convince themselves that they have what it takes to do what needs to be done. (T. Keller, 2009 boasting and faith)

ONE OF the best examples of this is in Judges 7 and the story of Gideon. Gideon had built a fantastic army who was ready to go to battle, but God keeps doing things that cut the army down smaller and smaller and smaller, BEFORE THE BATTLE... and when God gives His reason for doing this, the answer is "that they never have a reason to boast, saying 'we won the battle'"

the army started with 32,000 men... strong... able... they had a fighting chance to win a huge battle. But before the battle God intentionally dwindled it down to 300 men... and they went to battle, without weapons.

What would seem like pure insanity.

but do you think that when that battle was over, and the 300 men were victorious because God fought for them, that they were thinking:

"we did it" - - - WE DID IT!???

no! they were thinking "what a great God"

it had to be a miracle, and it was the same with Abraham.

and Paul here says "if Abraham had a reason to boast, this wouldn't work."  
- God had to choose Abraham... He had to choose someone who had tried to have kids, but had failed... someone who was least likely to be someone great... Because only then would it be God.

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We believe here in the God who still does miracles.

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This week for me, there was a definite good chunk of time when I was looking at my life... looking at our family, looking at our church and the things that God has put in our hearts to do... and the roller coaster that it has been from the MOMENT that we heard God say GO... Go to Detroit...

this is where I have you...  
this is what I have for you to do!

Many of you know much of our story... and you know its not always easy but you know that we love this place and the people God has called us to... enough that we have chosen to dream just absolutely huge for what we believe can be done here!

and listen, this is going to sound awful... but for a long time... a part of me actually believed that we would be able to do it. But now I know: it has to be a miracle.

Every time it seems like there is something that comes against us... something to show us that we can't do it... I always have this moment where I sort of look in the mirror, and pump myself up saying "Jacob, you can do this! You can do this! You got this."

Now... I know that whatever happens... God is going to have to do it.

and of course, each and every day I fall back on my own strength... I think... I can do something to make the church grow...

I can fix other people... I can make that person see what I see... I CAN MAKE UP FOR THE MESS THAT I CAUSED WHEN I OPENED MY BIG MOUTH WHEN I KNEW THAT I SHOULD HAVE BEEN SILENT... I can raise the money that is needed for the projects... I can earn the money that is needed to pay the bills... I can do a better job with my children... I can solve this... I can solve that. I am strong enough!

and each and every day I am ultimately reminded that I am not strong enough.

and if it is God, then I need to let it be God's...

because if it is God, it will happen. And if it is not, then I am spending all of my energy killing myself in all of the areas that God isn't in anyway.

And when we force things within the human framework, we do it our way, and we don't let God be God... we end up with in the place that Abraham, Sarah and Hagar found themselves. We end up with broken hearts and broken relationships... with bitter Sarah and outcast Hagar. With two sons who would battle for generations... centuries... even to this day.

Heartbreak on both sides... destruction on both sides... war is no respecter of persons... and it just keeps going. Brokenness... it can happen to anyone...

What that did to Sarah... what that did to Hagar... the damage done all around by the fact that the human mind can never comprehend the GLORY OF GOD... and so we work to try and make sense of what God has said...

if you read about it in Genesis... Sarai went along with the plan but she was absolutely devastated by its results. She became bitter... her joy was sucked completely away from her for a long time which only added fuel to the fire BECAUSE DURING THIS INTERMEDIATE TIME OF WAITING FOR THE PROMISE TO HAPPEN... she now had this bitterness in her heart to deal with on top of the doubt, and on top of the hurt she felt after a lifetime of barrenness and disappointment. WE NEVER MAKE IT BETTER when we take it into our own hands.

yet even though Abraham screwed it up... God still showed up. Because He made a promise, and His promises are bigger than our mistakes.

and that is what I take away from this passage.

God just needs our faith. He will use anyone... He doesn't need us to change who we are...

He just needs us to believe that He is who He says He is, and that He will do what He says that He will do in our lives.

And what He has promised to do is to redeem us. To put us back... to meet us right where we are... even though we have never kept our end of the covenant...

He has promised to be faithful. And He will be.