

When Theology Meets Reality

(Insights from Romans 4:16-25)

Pastor Bob Johnson, Grace Point Church, October 22nd, 2017

Paul's Summary Statement: (v16-17)

Obstacles to Accepting & Advancing the Gospel:

Performance, Privilege and ...

(Acts 10, Acts 15:1-11)

Keys to Trusting God in Tough Times: (v17-20)

1. **Abe believed ...** (v17)
'... in whom he believed.'
2. **Abe rehearsed ...** (v18)
'... as he had been told.'
3. **Abe looked at and beyond ...** (v19)
'... when he considered his own body ...'
4. **Abe gave ...** (v20-21)
'... as he gave glory to God.'

Paul's Closing Comments: (v22-25)

The invitation for justification by faith ...

The Trunk and Tail of Theology:

(James 2:18-24)

This Week's Discussion Guide:

Welcome to "Week 7" of this Fall season of our small groups at GPC! This is a 10 week session of small groups as we will wrap up the week of November 12th. Our small groups are where folks move from 'believers' to 'belongers'. May we receive lots of encouragement and support and deepening friendships as we meet together this fall to pray, support each other, and study God's Word together.

Looking Back:

Each week we'll look back and have an opportunity to share with our group how the past 7 days went and also share a few things to help us get to know each other better. What is something encouraging since our last meeting we can rejoice with you about or not so encouraging that we can offer support?

In Romans 4:18-21, Paul summarized Abraham and Sarah's faith as they waited for God to fulfill what he promised. In Romans 4:19, it says Abraham didn't weaken in faith even though their situation made it tempting to not trust God. When were you in a situation where, because of the size of the problem or the limits of your resources, made it tempting to not trust God? How did you respond? What did not trusting God look like and/or what did trusting God look like?

Last Sunday, Bob shared about an elephant's trunk and tail. Speaking of animals, did you have a favorite animal growing up? If you could be an animal, what would you like to be? (just for a little while). What animal would you definitely not want to be?

Last Sunday, Bob shared about 'The Trunk and Tail of Theology'. Who can summarize what he meant by that?

What are some things in the Bible that are hard for you to understand based on various passages or hard for you to believe?

Can you think of a time in your life when you wrestled with being obedient to a Bible passage you didn't like? Explain.

Each week in 'looking back', we also want to give each other the opportunity to look back since our last meeting and have an opportunity to share how we applied something to our daily lives that God prompted us from the Bible.

Looking Up:

As part of looking up and seeing what God can teach us this week, was there anything from last Sunday's message that particularly caught your attention, challenged you or needs some clarification?

1. Last Sunday, the teaching highlighted the fact that faith is measured less by our words and more by our obedience. In keeping with Biblical faith being an action oriented, how do the following verses challenge us to show people our faith in ways so counter-cultural, it is hard for them to not notice the difference?

Matthew 5:43-48
Matthew 7:12
Luke 6:35-36

Which of the actions mentioned in these passages is the most challenging for you to consistently live out? Which is the easiest?

2. One of Abraham's most significant experiences happened when God asked him to take his son up a mountain to sacrifice him (see Genesis 22 for the full story). Abraham's example of trusting God with the life of his son can leave us wondering, "How could I ever have that kind of faith and trust God that much?" How might the following passages help you answer this question?

Mark 9:14-29
John 4:46-53
Hebrews 12:1-3

Is there anything in your life right now you are having difficulty trusting God for?

3. Bob talked about how the early church experienced a lot of confusion over whether Gentiles who became Christ followers had to be circumcised and follow the Old Testament Jewish laws. In Galatians 2:11-16, we read about Paul defending the Gentile Christian's freedom from these requirements.

After reading the story, reflect on the following questions:

What surprises you or confuses you in this story?

What do you think Paul, Cephas (Peter) and Barnabas were feeling before and after Paul spoke up?

What was happening that was so important that Paul felt compelled to speak up?

If you had to explain the significance of this incident to a fellow believer, what would you say?

Looking Forward:

This last section is based on passages like the one below.

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. 23 For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. 24 You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. 25 But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

James 1:22-25 (NLT)

Let's all take a few minutes to silently pray and reflect back on this last week's message and what we discussed in our group. As we reflect, let's all ask God for a specific application that He might prompt us to live out this week.

To help us as we reflect, here are some possible applications to get us thinking ...

- Faith can be defined as 'trusting God enough to do what he says.' Is there any area in your life where you are struggling to trust God to do what he says? Who can you share your struggle with so that they can encourage you and pray for you?
- As Abe believed in a person and not a principle, you might read through some of the stories about Jesus in the gospels so that you can be reminded that he was a real person who had to choose to rely on God for strength and direction.
- In light of how God shows not partiality when it comes to the gospel, who can you pray for (that you might not naturally want to pray for) ... for God to do something powerful in their life?
- Because faith comes from hearing God's Word (Romans 10:17), I will choose to schedule daily time to read and reflect on God's Word.

As we look forward to this week, let's pray for one another!