

## Romans 4: 13 -25

Last week, when Jin and I went out for shopping, we shopped for the whole week. We planned to go to different shops to buy groceries for the whole week.

After we finished shopping and came home, I felt like I had done enough for the whole day and had no more energy left. Suddenly, Jin said we forgot to buy cake.

I said to Jin, sorry, I have no more energy, I can't go, it has to be tomorrow or don't worry about the cake. Maybe I could go, but I rather not.

Have you experienced a similar thing that I had? This might be a small day-to-day thing that we experience.

Once we are settled, then we find it not easy to move again.

Our story in the book of Romans begins with the faith journey that Abram had to make when God called him to go to an unknown place.

In his faith journey, the Apostle Paul highlights that faith in God is what makes a relationship with Him possible.

He wanted to challenge Christians in the church in Rome in the life of a highly developed country like Rome, a multicultural society, a multi-religious city, with many temptations from various places, a place for entertainment and enjoyment. What does it mean to have faith in Christ in such a developed and socialised country?

It was a difficult task for Paul to explain to the Jews and also the gentiles about what it is that brings everyone together in the relationship with God?

Paul preaches that it is the faith that makes the relationship with God possible.

Paul shares that the righteous person lives by faith, not by the law.

Paul explains to the Jews that they are saved by the cross of Christ, not by the law that they have kept from Moses.

Paul explains that Jesus has made it too easy for Jews and Gentiles to access God simply by faith.

Because Jews believed that physical circumcision, which is the law, is how they begin the relationship with God and continue the relationship with God, Paul preached that they are not anymore.

With the same perspective, the Jews strongly disagreed with the Gentiles to commit themselves to circumcision to become Christians.

Jews believed that the compromise on circumcision was a degradation of God's Word.

So physical circumcision and other ethical behaviour, and laws that they had to follow for worship and for life were something that they couldn't compromise, something that they couldn't give up from their perspective.

Paul says that they are free from the law, that is including the gentiles.

Because they are not saved by keeping the law or remain saved by the law. What sustains their wholeness is a relationship based on faith.

Paul presented that faith involves both a belief and a commitment to faithfulness in the ongoing relationship between God and the world. It is a clear way of being and in the way people live their lives.

Paul shared that Abraham achieved a right relationship with God before there was a law. And faith was the basis of Abraham's relationship with God.

Paul is saying that faith has always been the basis of a relationship with God. So that Paul confidently says that it is a belief that God can do what seems impossible in his relationship with people.

Abraham first lived in Mesopotamia, in the north of what is now Iraq. This was a highly developed civilisation of cities. Alongside rivers, economy, culture, and life were developed.

Abram was a Semite shepherd, living in tents with his small tribe, moving from place to place to find feed for his cattle, sheep, and goats.

The Bible tells us that he first lived at a place called Ur. Later, he moved up to Haran, which is the southeastern part of Turkey. It takes 1500km in

distance. He travelled 1500 km with his family, livestock, and slaves and their families.

When he was settled in Haran, God said to Abram, "Go from your country, from your father's house to the land that I will show you."

Abram was to travel from Haran, which is now in Turkey, to Canaan, which is now the region covering Israel and Palestine.

Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. His life, his family, and all were settled down there. But he had to travel another 800 kilometres. And he didn't know where he was going.

Through the world's common sense, he wouldn't want to leave there, he wouldn't want to leave his father's house, with his aching body. He was well over his retired age.

The Bible testifies that at the age of 75, he knew what his reality was, yet he believed God's promise.

He simply believed that God would be faithful to him. He would bless him, and he would be a blessing to all nations.

Based on his faith, he believed in God's promises even when there were no signs or miraculous evidence of proof of his promise.

Abram knew that Sarai was in her older age. He knew Sarai had passed the age that she could conceive a baby. But Abram still believed in God, even though he was 100 years old.

And God gave Abram and Sarai a child, Isaac, who became the father of millions. God who can do what seems impossible, possible.

Today's passage from the book of Genesis and the Romans clearly says that He didn't start believing in God after God worked His miracle. But Abram believed before Sarai was pregnant. Abram did not believe as a result of the miracle. And he knew what the reality was, yet he believed.

We find a similar movement in today's gospel story.

The woman who had been sick for 12 years. She believed that Jesus could heal her if she touched the edge of his garment.

Her faith was not the result of the healing. Jesus said simply to her, "Your faith has healed you." This woman in the Gospel had the same faith as Abraham: it was impossible for the gentile woman to be healed and to be included in the house of God.

God can do what seems impossible from a human perspective.

Paul preached that Jesus has died and resurrected from death.

For him, it was what seems impossible becomes possible with God.

Through the resurrection, all human beings can enter a relationship of faith with God, and they can continue in that relationship.

This is universally true, equal, and made too easy for everyone to enter the relationship.

Through his death on the cross and resurrection, Christ made it too easy to enter the relationship with God and carry on the relationship with Him.

That is the promise that God made to Abraham. He would be blessed, and through him, all people would be blessed and numerous as sand on the beach.

Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

His promise doesn't stop there.

God wants us to bless our relationship with others in the way he blessed Abraham and his descendants.

He has promised us that He will forgive those we forgive; he will love those we love; he will curse people whom we curse. But rather, he has called us to bless others.

It is the privilege of people who have faith in Christ that we may display what we believe in action.

Through our action, God fulfills his promise that he had made to Abram, Sarah, and the sick woman.

God made what seems impossible possible.

What is an impossible thing for you, but possible for God?

What is your prayer that hasn't been answered for a long time? What is it that God is wanting you to do, yet you see that unlikely happen?

Faith in God certainly allows us to hold such a belief, but it also challenges us with similar struggles that Abraham, Sarai, Paul, and the sick woman in the gospel faced.

Apostle Paul is challenging us this morning: Is faith the basis of our relationship with God or something else?

And also, what is non-negotiable in our relationship with God? Something that we should not compromise in our relationship with God.

What Paul challenged in Romans still challenges us.

Amen.