

## OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

WHEN DARKNESS RAINS

YOUR GOD CAN'T FIX IT?

FEBRUARY 14-20, 2016



### MAIN POINT

When people question the goodness and care of our God, we respond by clinging to the hope we have in Him.

### THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. How would you define hope, and what does it mean to have hope?

2. How does depression steal hope, even from believers?

**Leader:** Hope is a feeling of expectation that something is going to happen. Human beings hope because we are made to hope. You don't have to have much life experience to see that things are not as they should be. All people recognize that on some level, the world is broken and in need of help. When people realize this, they respond to it in many different ways. Every person wants to hope that the trials of life can and will one day be different. Christians are those who have placed their hope in the solid foundation of who God is. Our hope is not abstract but firm and certain. When darkness rains on us, we cling to the hope we find in our God.

### DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 4:13-17.

3. Who was Abraham, and what did God promise Him (refer to Genesis 12:1-4)? Why does Paul hold Abraham up as an example?

4. What promise (v. 13) belongs to us because of the faith we have in God (v. 16)?

5. God is faithful to His children, and He reiterates His faithfulness time and again in His Word. What promises of God are you struggling to cling to in this season of life? Or what promise do you struggle with most often?

**Leader:** Abraham was an idol worshiper in the land of Ur, in modern day Iraq. But God called Abraham out of idol worship and into a relationship with Him. Along with a relationship, Abraham was given the promise that He would one day be the father of many nations. Scripture tells us Abraham believed God and did as He said.

Abraham left behind all that he knew in the hope that God would be faithful in what He promised. The life of Abraham is held up as an example for us because He hoped in God, despite what was going on in his life and the world around him. Scripture includes many promises to those who believe in Jesus, including but not limited to the promises in the following passages: Romans 10:9; Romans 6:23; Romans 8:37-39; John 14:27; Philippians 4:19; Isaiah 40:29-31; Matthew 11:28-29; Jeremiah 29:11; and Ephesians 1:3-14. These promises can be a source of hope for you no matter what you are facing today.

### > HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 4:18-21.

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6. According to verse 18, why did Abraham believe God? What circumstances in Abraham's life might have caused him to doubt God (vv. 19-20)?

7. What does it mean to hope "against all hope"? What in your life has caused you to have to fight to maintain hope?

8. Paul wrote that Abraham was "fully persuaded" (v. 21) that God could fulfill His promises to Abraham. What are some of the traits and actions of God in Scripture that help us be fully persuaded to hope in Him?

**Leader:** To be the father of many nations, you first have to produce an heir. For years Abraham waited for a son, to the point that it seemed humanly impossible for him to become the father of many nations based on old age alone. The phrase "against all hope" highlights that seeming impossibility, yet Abraham still chose to place his hope in God. The author of Hebrews defined faith as being certain of what we hope for even though we can't see it (11:1). Abraham hoped in the promise of God to him even though his body was failing. When Abraham was old and advanced in years, God delivered on His promise by providing Abraham with a son. Abraham was fully persuaded to hope in God because God made a promise to Abraham. We have a record of the promises of God in Scripture, and each one of those promises find their "yes" in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:20).

### > HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 4:22-25.

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9. Paul included the fact that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness for our benefit. What is the faith of Abraham ultimately meant to point us to?

10. How would you sum up the promise from verses 23-25? What implications does this promise have on how we face today?

**Leader:** To support his claim about Abraham, Paul quoted Scripture. When Paul references Scripture in verse 23, he makes the point that it is instructive to his audience (and us by extension). Like Abraham, we receive the righteousness of God through our faith in Him. The promises of God were not only for Abraham's benefit but for

ours as well. The promises of God are recorded for us in the words of the Bible so we can hope in God as Abraham did. The faith of Abraham is meant to lead us to the faithfulness of Christ. Jesus is worthy of our deepest hope. He will never leave us and paid for our hope with His life. Trust in Him!

### DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- 11. Reflect on some of the difficult times in your life, especially in your faith journey, that you later found God used for good. What did you learn about God from those experiences? How did your hope impact your discouragement or depression?**
- 12. What are some specific ways we might encourage one another to believe God is good and cling to the hope we have in Him? Share about a time when you needed hope and were encouraged by the story of someone in our Growth Group.**
- 13. Take a few minutes to reflect on God's proven faithfulness in the past. What light does His past faithfulness shed on the darkness of today?**

### PRAYER

Pray that when darkness comes upon us we would hope and trust in the promises of God. Acknowledge your doubts and cast them on the Lord who stands ready to deal with them and point you back to Him. Praise God for being worthy of our hope and trust, and ask Him to use the trials in our lives to point others to Him.

### MEMORIZE

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Romans 4:18

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

ROMANS 4:13-25.

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4:13. The law demanded obedience and performance. If the law was violated, wrath resulted. The law was not a system of grace. God's promise was one of grace. The promise to Abraham and his seed (Gal 3:16-18) was not through the law but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

4:14-15. If the inheritance of the promise came by legal obedience, then the way of faith is empty. Furthermore, no one would inherit the promise since no one could keep the law.

4:16-17. God's promise is by faith, so that it may be guaranteed to both Jews and Gentiles who believe. If it were by law, no such guarantee would be possible. To make it certain, therefore, the promise was according to grace. Abraham was also promised to be the father of many nations. Abraham believed in the God who created everything from nothing and gives life to the dead.

4:18. It seemed humanly impossible for Abraham to become the father of many nations when he was old, but he placed his hope in God's promise.

4:19-20. Abraham had a realistic evaluation of his prospects for fatherhood. He was about 100 years old, and Sarah was childless and long past child-bearing years. Yet Abraham did not doubt God's promise, and God strengthened his faith.

4:23-24. Everything in Scripture is for our benefit. The experiences of Abraham are as relevant to us as they were to him, for we serve the same Creator God who can do the humanly impossible. We are credited as righteous before God in the same manner as Abraham: by faith.

4:25. Jesus was delivered up for our trespasses as promised in Isa 52:13-53:12. Who delivered up Jesus? Was it Judas? Pilate? The Jewish Sanhedrin? Satan? Certainly all these were causal agents in the crucifixion of Christ, but ultimately it was the sovereign God who brought it to pass in order to fulfill His plan of redemption (Ac 4:27-28). The Father delivered Jesus up for our trespasses, and raised Him so that His righteous Servant would justify many people (Isa 53:11).