
Give it up for Accelerate Church [a church recently launched by Pastor Ernest Grant, II in Camden County, a suburb of Philadelphia]. Incredible. And just to give everyone a little bit of an update, they launched a couple of weeks ago and they had 330 people show up opening weekend and seven people gave their lives to Jesus from day one.

We just want to share that with you. That's what you are a part of. Being a part of this church... I think a lot of times we come in here and think, "Okay, this is what is going on," and so much is happening, but it's not just here in our city, it's around the world. Your generosity went to planting that church. And if you're here today and you want to start partnering with us, joining us in giving, you can always go to our website tpcc.org.

Traders Point, welcome. Are we doing alright today? Almost believed you. Almost believed you. But for those who are here for the first time, we are in our series *Recalibrate*. And maybe when you heard that during the host moments you were like, "I don't even know what that means."

To me that sounds like if I took my truck in to a mechanic and he's calling me later and he's like, "Hey, man. We're going to have to recalibrate this." And I'm like, "Recalibrate what?"

"The whole thing. It's going to be about \$20,000, but it's fine."

But it is a technical term a lot of times. So I started looking into it from that side: what does it mean to recalibrate or when do you need to recalibrate. And here's the definition that I got. It says that you need to recalibrate:

"After an instrument has been exposed to a shock, vibration, or physical damage, which might potentially have compromised the integrity of its calibration."

And just by showing a little bit of noise, has anyone been exposed to a shock, vibration, or even physical damage recently? Yeah. Me too.

The other thing that really stood out to me is *instrument*. And this word kind of jumped out to me because, some of you know this, when God was talking about Paul, He said, "He is my chosen instrument. He's my chosen instrument that I'm going to use to tell people about who I am."

I think it is important for us to have that umbrella over us that we are God's chosen instruments. Where you are in your life in this season, at your work, in your school, you have been placed there for a very specific purpose. You are God's chosen instrument to reach those around you.

And at the same time I feel like every time we leave here, we feel this pull, right? We have this confidence in here. We have this belief in here, but when we go out there, it feels like we're pulled to just a little bit off, "Don't say that. Don't do that, just fit in. Just be quiet." And little by little we just kind of begin to move and work our way off.

And that was the other word. It says that when the *integrity* of the instrument has been compromised.... And I was just saying, "Man, that is the work of the Devil." He can't defeat us. He can't take us down, but if he can just get us to compromise our integrity, then he has a foothold.

So what we said is, "You know what? We're standing for that. We will admit that we've been through some stuff. We've been shaken up a little bit, but we are God's chosen instrument." And what we need to be recalibrated is a standard to be calibrated to. And we've said that our standard, the way that we're going to live our life, is True North. Here's what that means:

True North: Following after Jesus in every area of our lives

That's what we want to do. We want to follow after Him. And it's been this idea of Lordship, right? It's not just that God is our Savior, that He saved us that one day, that one time, but that He's actually Lord over our lives. And every day when we leave here, we are attaching ourselves to Him and following after Him faithfully.

And to do this we said, "Hey, we're going to study the book of Romans," which is just a behemoth of a book. But it has been so good. Has everybody been enjoying this study through Romans over the past few weeks—those who have been here? How about AB. Has he been killing it going over it these past few weeks preaching? Unbelievable. It's so rich.

I love what Dr. Tony Evans actually said about it. He said:

"Romans is the constitution of the church."

It is so rich and complex and it kind of lays out: this is what we believe as a church and how we should operate to continue moving to True North.

And what we're going to do today is we are going to jump right in and we're going to be in Romans, chapter 4, starting in verse 1. So if you have a Bible, you can go ahead and open it up and flip there.

I do want to give us a recap, though, as to what's been going on over the past few weeks. What we've been seeing is that Paul is the guy who is writing this letter to the Romans. And there's a lot going on. There's a lot of tension there, mainly between two groups of people.

You see, you have the Jewish people, and you have the Gentiles. And Gentile is just an all-encompassing word for anyone who is not Jewish. You see, for pretty much always, these two groups of people have been separate. They did not interact together, they did not hang out, and they did not talk. And now they are together all of the time. They are worshipping together.

And the Jewish people are kind of cool with it, but kind of not. Like, "Hey, glad you're here. But while you're here, here are a few things that you need to do." And mainly there are two big ones. One, you need to follow all of the Jewish law. All of it. The second one, "Hey, fellas. All of you are going to need to get circumcised."

As you can imagine, trying to get grown men to get themselves circumcised is kind of a losing battle, right? Wives thought it was hard trying to get them to clean out the gutters. Imagine if you had to go to them and say, "Hey, can you add this to your to-do list? Can you get circumcised really quick?"

And what Paul is going to step in here and say is, "Hey, guys. I want us to be grounded. I want us to remember that there is something that unites us. And it's bigger than any law, it's bigger than circumcision, it's the work of Christ. And what Jesus has brought together, let nothing divide."

And what he is going to do today is he's actually going to continue on with his argument of showing that we are not saved by what we do or what we've done or what family we come from, we're saved by one thing and that's Jesus.

But what he has to do here is... He is speaking to a very legal community, hundreds and hundreds of years of following after this law. So what he has to do is present precedent. He has to produce precedent to show that it's not the law that saves you, because they had lived for so long thinking that how they lived, how they obeyed God's law is what made them right in the eyes of God.

But what Paul is going to introduce today is set precedent to show that there is actually something that is before all of the law. And that's what unites us all together. It's not any of these outward things.

With all of that being said, hopefully you've had enough time to get to Romans, chapter 4. Starting in verse 1 he says:

"Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation." (NLT)

Alright? So he's setting up, he's building his argument, he's making a claim that they can't disagree with. He's starting with some common ground, right? Abraham is, humanly speaking, the founder. And then he would say that Abraham and his wife are the father and the mother of our faith.

And we need to understand a few things about them to make sense of what we're going to read next. The important thing is to know that that is true, that God picked Abraham out of nothing. It wasn't because Abraham was incredible or really good looking or faithful. We learn in the book of Joshua, that Abraham's family actually worshipped other gods.

But God picked him out of a group of people and said, "I want to use you. I'm going to use you to start this new nation." And what we know about Abraham is that he is married to a woman named Sarah. And what we know about them is they can't have kids. That's all the information that we get.

And then God comes to them and says, "I want you to leave everything. I want you to leave your hometown. I want you to leave all of this land that you've known. I want you to leave your family and trust Me." He was 75 years old when God tells him that.

Imagine what it would take for that to happen. And the wild thing is that Abraham believed Him. He says, "Okay, if You say it's true then I will go. I will follow You. Where am I going?" He said, "Quit asking so many questions. Just start walking. You'll know when you get there." He does tell him a few things though. These are the few things that He tells him. He says:

"I will make you into a great nation."

And He also tells him:

"All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

Now, this word here *all* if you trace it back to the original language it actually means *all*. Okay? So it's all of the families, everyone who we are talking about here, Jewish and Gentile. This is a promise that God made to Abraham, that all of the families on earth will be blessed through him.

And this is what we're going to pick up with in Romans, chapter 4. Paul is going to reference this account. This story here where God came to Abraham, and He says in verse 2:

"What did he discover about being made right with God? If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God's way. For the Scriptures tell us, 'Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous...'"

So this is where those two worlds are colliding. God came to Abraham, and He laid this whole thing out for him. And He says, "I want you to follow Me. I want you to trust Me. I want you to leave here, leave everything that you've ever known, and go after Me."

Abraham goes. He does it, to his respect. He goes and he leaves but time goes by and things aren't really going the way that he thought they would, right? He thought that this was going to look very, very different.

He knows this story of his life where he and his wife have struggled to have kids, but now God has promised him that he's going to be the father of a nation, but he's not even a father in his own house. So he's in a really tough spot. And he cries out to God and says, "God, I need Your help. I need You to walk me through this."

And what we're going to see here is the groundbreaking truth that Paul gives to us in this moment. It is how we answer this question that changes everything. Okay? I want us to read this account in Genesis when God comes to Abraham. He said:

"Then the Lord took Abraham outside and said to him, 'Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have.' And Abraham believed the Lord and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith." Genesis 15:5-6 (NLT)

What Paul has just done here is this unbelievable move that I believe was inspired by the Holy Spirit. To look at years and years of this foundation that said that we are saved, that we are made right, by how well we follow God, and how good we can be, how strict we can be to keep these laws, and to be circumcised, and doing all of these things—but in a moment, with one verse, Paul says that there is actually something that predates all of that. And that is that Abraham was made right because of his faith.

That's what we have to see today, that it is not by what we do or what we have done or what has been done to us, we are saved by our faith in God. And that is really, really good news.

And what Paul is going to do next is to show that this is the precedent that he needed, right? If he can show that our spiritual father, the one who all of the Jewish nation looked to saying, "This is our guy," if he can show that he was actually saved by faith and not by what he did, then it dominoes. Because it means that if it was true for him, it is true for everyone following after him, for all those to come.

Keep reading because Paul is going to double-down now. It's not enough for them to see that this is what it has always been, but he wants to actually play out the implications if it was the other way, that if having a good relationship or right relationship with God was about what we could do, a problem arises there too. Look at what he says in verse 4. He says:

"When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners."

So he throws out a handful of words there. Mainly *work, wages, and a gift*. Once again, he's drawing back to this idea. And I just want you to think back to the many jobs that you have had. When you work you get a paycheck, right?

Now, I've done a lot of work in my life. I've worked at a lot of places. I've done a lot of things for money. The thing that was common, the thing that was standard with all of these places, is that there was a process where I went to work, I did a job, I produced a service, and at the end of that time I got paid.

You guys remember... I don't know does anybody still get a physical paycheck? That was a moment, right? You would work and then you would actually show up. The checks would arrive, and you would get a check.

On those checks it did not say, "Hey, Ryan. A gift from me to you." That would have been the most disrespectful... "I worked hard for this. I got this money." I got it, then I gave it to Finish Line at the time, but it was mine for a little bit.

There is this idea of when we come to God that if it's not by faith, that if it's not because we believe and trust God, but it's what we do, there is not only the problem that we actually have to earn our salvation, but if you play it out on the other side, it means that you are saying that God owes you. That if you can live a certain way, at the end of your life, or even at the end of your day, that there are some things that you can demand from God.

And maybe when you just say that, it doesn't sound like anyone could believe it. But they can and they have, and they do.

Do you believe that God owes you?

I can remember the first time I gave to the church. The first time I gave to the church I was sitting to the left of the stage in a section at Northwest. This was back when we used to pass the plate. So the plate was going by, and I'd never done anything more than pass the plate before. But it came and this time I had \$40. I don't know why I picked \$40. That's just what I decided. And I put that \$40 in the plate and I pushed hard too to make it sound like it was more than it was. That's on me. You're welcome, God.

And I was feeling so good about myself that I decided I was going to treat myself to a gift of my own. So I went to Taco Bell where all dreams come true. And I was going to have a good lunch on me. I ordered a Cheesy Gordita Crunch, Nachos BellGrande, and Pintos and Cheese with sour cream. I know the menu, okay? I'm ordering it all.

And after I placed my order, she tells me how much it's going to be, and I go to roll my window up because it's raining. The window starts to go up, falls off of the track, goes all of the way down. I push the button and it just was running. It needed to be recalibrated.

And I drive up and I get my food and I'll be honest. I was having a really hard time like, "The first time? The same day? The same afternoon? The day that I give money to the church," I believed God, "I'm going to trust You with some of my resources," is the day my window breaks. How do I justify that?

See, this is part of what can happen with us over time. It's this idea that when we do something good then God better do what He's supposed to do and give us what we want. Like it's some kind of tennis match, "Hey, God. I'm hitting this one to you, You hit me something back."

"I'm going to come to church. I'm going to serve. I'm going to read my Bible, but God, I'm going to need that paycheck, I'm going to need that new house, I'm going to need some things from You."

And what Paul is making absolutely clear here is that our relationship with God can either be wages that we earn or try to earn, or it can be a gift. And luckily for us, it is a gift.

So please hear this. When we connect with God in any form, whether that's coming to church, whether that's serving His people, whether that's reading Scripture or sitting in prayer, we do not come to get anything other than God. We come to say how thankful we are that we are saved by grace through faith. It is nothing that we have done. It's only what He has done for us.

And we get to know God. God is our prize. God is our possession. And the fact that we can go to the Creator of all things and speak—that's the win, not what happens outside of that. And that's what Paul is showing here. It is a gift.

But he's also going to say, "Okay. I think we've proven that this is a gift that was given to Abraham. And it didn't stop with him, it went through all people, including us—not just the Jewish people, this gift is for everyone else. He asks, "Did God really mean all families when He said *all families*?" Look at what he says:

"Now, is this blessing only for the Jews, or is it also for uncircumcised Gentiles?" He could have just said, "Gentiles," but he's really making a point here. "Well, we have been saying that Abraham was counted as righteous by God because of his faith. But how did this happen? Was he counted as righteous only after he was circumcised, or was it before he was circumcised? Clearly, God accepted Abraham before he was circumcised!"

"... So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who have faith but have not been circumcised. They are counted as righteous because of their faith. And Abraham is also the spiritual father of those who have been circumcised, but only if they have the same kind of faith Abraham had before he was circumcised."

Now, I want us to get into this picture right now of what Paul is doing. He's beginning to build this argument with all of the Jewish nation to show them that it is our faith in Jesus that unites us. And it precedes everything else.

And what he's going to do now is basically he is putting them on the witness stand and he's just made his case showing that we are saved by faith, and he has the Jewish nation sitting there and he goes to the witness stand and he says, "When did it happen?" And then their attorney steps up and says, "Objection, vague." (I watch a lot of law shows.)

So then Paul restates his question. He says, "Strike that. When was Abraham made right in the eyes of God? Was it before or after he was circumcised?" And they are kind of squirming a little bit, "I mean it's hard to know, exactly."

"So, I will state it again. When was he made right? Before or after he was circumcised?"

"Before, technically."

"Okay, so you're saying that he was made right before he was circumcised. What about this? When was he made right with God, was it before or after the law?"

"Before."

"So, you're telling me in this courtroom today that Abraham was made right not by his circumcision, not by following the law, which he didn't even know, but you're going to tell me here today that—"

"Objection. Leading."

"Okay, I'll get to a question. So you are made right by God because of your faith. Is that what you are telling me?"

"Yes."

And their minds would have exploded. Paul just used precision here to be able to get to his point to show that this gift is for everyone. So look at what he says, *"Abraham is the spiritual father of those who have faith but have not been circumcised. They are counted as righteous because of their faith. And Abraham is also the spiritual father of those who have been circumcised but only if they have the same kind of faith Abraham had before he was circumcised."*

So this is the moment he's come down to. He's just boiled down everything that he has been leading up to, everything that he has been arguing. And he made it into this statement: All have been saved, both Jew and Gentile by faith. This is the Good News for us, everyone in this room, we have been welcomed into the family of God. We are considered *all*, and we are welcome into the family of God.

And then he says, "Yeah, you're welcome in too. All of the Gentiles and the Jews are welcome in too but not because of how well you are following the law or because of being circumcised." He says, "There is actually something that came before." He says, "You are saved if, only if, you have the same kind of faith that Abraham had before he was circumcised."

What kind of faith did Abraham have? What was that kind of faith? I think that's important to know because it wasn't, I think, the way that we talk about faith these days. So I want to read this and show the distinction between what faith really is and what we've taken to believe it for. It says:

"This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing. Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations.

"For God had said to him, 'That's how many descendants you will have!' And Abraham's faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah's womb."

So we see here that it's not just any kind of faith. You know I think a lot of times when we talk about faith it's almost used whimsically. Like, "I didn't really plan for anything, so I've just got to have faith."

It's like, "Hey, how did you do on that test?"

"I hope I did pretty good. I have faith."

"Did you study?"

"Oh, no."

"You're going to need something."

But this idea of faith is not detached from reason. It's not detached from a logical decision. You see, with Abraham—he placed his faith in a God he knew, a God who brought dead things to life, a God that nothing was too hard for.

So this wasn't just like this idea of, "I guess I don't know what's going on so I'm going to have faith." No. That's not what you have, or I have either. We place our faith in a God who is above it all, who reigns, who is in control, who is powerful, who brings the dead back to life, who speaks and universes are created, who saves over and over again—a God we can show to be faithful account after account after account. This is the God we serve.

If anyone thankful for this kind of God? Does anyone know this kind of God? Because there are people here today who need to know that their faith is not detached from reality or logic or reason. It's placing their trust in a God who you know.

Abraham knew God. This is the God he believed in. This is the kind of faith that he had, but it doesn't mean that he was without fault, and it doesn't mean that he didn't struggle, and it doesn't mean that he didn't have doubts. And I hope through his account, even as the spiritual father that he is, that you can relate to his humanness and Sarah's.

Because like I said, it went from 75 years old, where you know, biology is in there. Now they are 100 years old and 90 years old, still childless. And they're doubting. But look at where God meets them once again. It says:

"Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children. So she laughed silently to herself and said, 'How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?' Then the Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, "Can an old woman like me have a baby?"'"

This is the moment when, I think a lot of times, we find ourselves in and I just want us to have an honest moment. Are there times in your life right now that if you either read about them in

Scripture or someone told you something, that you would laugh them out of the room? They would bring it to you, and you would just say, "No, that's not true of me."

And I think that's exactly where that thought comes from. If you notice where Sarah's mind went when God said this. He said, "You will do this," and if you noticed her first reaction, she focuses on herself. She said, "I am. I am a worn-out old woman. I am well past the age to have a baby. I am."

And this is the difference that we've been hitting on every week in this series. The difference between the Gospel and religion. Religion always finds its way turning inward and focusing on: I am. I am not enough. I am not the one who can meet this need. "I am only a single mother." "I am divorced." "I am not enough." "I am unlovable." "I am someone who will never graduate. No one in my family has ever graduated." And our hope begins to diminish. That's religion.

What God does here is a perfect example of what the Gospel is. She's saying, "I am. I am. I am." And God is saying, "Look at me. I Am. I Am the One who is going to meet you in the middle of this. I Am the One who is well aware of your physical limitations. I Am the One who is going to meet you in your need. I Am the One who fulfills the promise. And as you look at the weakness of your I am look at Mine because My I Am is perfect and I will meet you in every one of your needs."

This is the question that I want to ask today:

Is anything too hard for the Lord?

Right now, like you're having that moment when.... Is there something in your life where you've either put it away, you've just decided this can't happen, this never will be? Is there anything too hard for the Lord? Is there anything that makes you laugh? Is there anything that makes you cynical about the promises of God and all that He's said that He's going to do? Is anything too hard for the Lord?

This is where our faith is rooted. What we do when it's not just our faith and position one day when we die, but right now when we leave this room. Is there anything that you're putting in your mind that is too hard for the Lord, any position, any circumstance, that you are saying is hopeless?

And I just want to give us some things that we can center back to, and we can know about what we can do when we face hopelessness, when things look beyond our control, alright? And if you're taking notes this is the time to write them down—write these things down.

Know God.

This is what these chapters have been all about. Our human tendency is to look inward and to see who we are. But our faith is not rooted in ourselves, it is rooted in God. So we have to know God. Because we can't have faith in someone who we don't know. We can't go to a God we don't know.

In the Bible it talks about when people are going to come to God at the end of life and they are going to say, "God, we did all of these things in Your name. We served. We prophesied. We went to church. We did all of this. And He's going to say, "Get away from Me. I never knew you."

The most important thing that we can do with our lives is to know God. It will shape every aspect of it. That's why we put so much into this series with the journal and the additional resources and the Daily Bible Readings so that we can wake up every day and recalibrate to True North. So that we can be connected to God, not to get anything from Him, but to just be with Him, sit with Him, to learn who He is and to know Him on a relational level.

That's what Jesus died for us to have. And when we know God, we have a whole new safety net because we just see how big and how powerful and how strong He really is.

Growing up I had a very strong grandpa. Anybody have a strong grandpa who you just love? He is kind of bigger than life. You feel comfortable when you are with him. You have faith because you know when you are with him you are going to be okay. That was my grandpa.

And I remember one day when I was a little kid, we were leaving a gas station and as we were walking out the front doors we were stepping out there and there was a guy leaning up against the gas station. And he said, "Hey," he was talking to my grandpa, "what would you do if I pulled this gun on you?"

We were walking. My grandpa was walking. I was right beside him. He doesn't break stride. He takes a puff of his cigarette. He says, "I'd make you eat it." And then he flipped it at him.

The man said, "What would you do if I pulled this gun on you?" My grandpa said, "I would make you eat it," and then flipped his cigarette at him. I promise you walking to the parking lot, I have never felt safer. I was waiting for somebody else to come. Who's going to touch me? Who's going to do anything?

This is what the kind of faith and hope and security that knowing God produces. My Father owns this place. He is with me. I'm going to be alright. But we have to know God.

The second thing is this:

Sit with spiritual fathers and mothers.

Here's what I mean by this. We've been talking a lot about, referencing, our spiritual mother and father, Abraham and Sarah. But we also have spiritual mothers and fathers in our church. And when we are going through tough times, when we are beginning to lose hope, what we need is some assurance from some people who have been where we are.

I'm telling you one of the things I love about our church is that it is multi-generational. And I'm not going to say that there are old people here. There are sages here. There are people here who have built their lives on the blood of Jesus Christ and all that He has done. They have been where you are. And they can help you.

I just want to show appreciation for our sages in the room, can we let our church know at every campus that you are here, that you have some wisdom. Yeah. See. Don't let that fool you. There is silence in wisdom, alright? There is wisdom. They are playing it close to their hearts, but they are there.

And for all of the younger people, there is this need that you have right now, you trying to figure out what's going on. You need people to pour into your life. You need people to put their arms

around you as spiritual mothers and fathers to show you things that they did that they wish they wouldn't have done and to show you things that you should try that can work.

Our church should be a beautiful exchange of generations coming together and passing knowledge back and forth. And our sages, you need to hear this, you may have retired from work, but you have never retired from ministry. And this is a call to you. We need you in our lives. And now can we get a celebration from the younger generation to say, "We need you. We want you."

Find some spiritual mentors to sit with. I started doing this with one of our elders, Rod. And it is just unbelievable to sit with him and hear from him. Get a few. They are everywhere. Older people are here. Do it.

The final one is:

Drop anchor.

Drop anchor. I want you to write that down because I think the author of Hebrews really solidifies what this looks like. Our hope and our faith are not just out in heaven one day, but it's a heavy thing. It has weight. It has substance. It has power. And listen to the way that he talks about our hope and our faith. He said:

"This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary." Hebrews 6:19 (NLT)

I want you to see that. Our hope, our faith is an anchor. And we all have anchors right now, things that we've placed our hope and our faith in. And the problem with a lot of the things that we're trying to anchor ourselves with: money, power, even our relationships here with our family, our position as a mother or a father, a friend—however we're trying to label ourselves, that anchor only goes down so far.

And the moment we leave here (this is why we have a hard time staying calibrated) we get moved around. The waves push us and move us as they please. But the author of Hebrews said, "No, there is actually an anchor—there is an anchor for your soul."

There is an anchor that is so heavy, it doesn't stay at the top. It goes all the way down to the depths of your soul and it anchors to that standard, it anchors you to the likeness of Jesus Christ. And it gives you true identity.

Your identity is not made up by what you do or how well you do it. Your identity is decided and declared. It is declared. You are a son of God. You are a daughter of God. You are chosen, free, and adopted. That is yours. That is a gift that is yours. You have identity. You have purpose. You have a reason for all of the places that you are in. You have assurances.

Your faith tells you, "What I see in front of me is not all there is to be seen because there is a God who reigns above it all and is in control and He is going to lead me." That is the kind of faith that we have. A faith that stands courageously in the face of hopelessness. There is power in our faith.

About a month ago my wife and I and a group of us went over to see some of our friends. And they are in a really tough time. As a parent, I don't think it gets any harder than what they were

experiencing. You see, they just found out that their two-year-old son had cancer. And we went over there to worship. We went over there to pray. We went over there to bring them things. We went over there to be hope.

And we're praying. And we're praying for the miraculous. We're praying that this cancer would be removed. We're praying because we believe God is able to do anything. And I finished praying and I'm thinking that is the end of the group prayer. But then the mom starts praying. And she prayed, "God, I believe. I believe that You are able to do this. I believe that You are able to heal." But then she said, "But even if I lose my son, I know You are good."

And I'm telling you, it hit me in the moment, and it hasn't left in the month since. That is faith. Faith that completely trusts God to do what only He can do and to know that even when He doesn't do things the way we thought He would that He is still good.

And I believe that if we have accounts of faith like this and if we have women amongst us who are praying prayers like that... you cannot pray a prayer like that unless you truly believe that God is who He said He is. That is the hope that we have opened ourselves up to. That is the faith that we have.

And I just want to close today by reading the Good News. Paul does an amazing job of this in almost every chapter, just summarizing what it is that we have because of Jesus. It says:

"Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. He was fully convinced that God was able to do whatever He promises.

"And because of Abraham's faith, God counted him as righteous. And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was recorded for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God." Romans 4:20-25 (NLT)

There is a moment here where I believe that we all have an opportunity to respond in faith. And it's through Jesus. See, Jesus is the Son of God. God sent Him here to live that perfect life, that standard that we could never live up to.

And even though He was perfect and was blameless He was convicted and found guilty and sent to a cross. And unlike what He did for Abraham and Sarah, He wasn't just as good as dead—He was dead. He was murdered, thrown into a tomb. But our God rose. And our God reigns. And this is the God who you are placing your faith in today.

I know that there are a lot of us here.... Maybe you're having a hard time wrestling with: is anything too hard for the Lord? And maybe there was a season when you would have answered that with, "No way. God can do anything." But now you're in this place where you are struggling and you need to be reminded of the hope that you have, that your God is for you and your God is with you. And in this moment, you need to surrender some things to Him.

Others of you, you need to see hope for the first time. You need to drop your anchor. You need to come to this place in surrender and say, "God, I believe." And to know that it's not based on what you've done or what you've been through or what's been done to you. You are saved. You

are made right because of the finished work of Jesus on the cross. And you can be welcomed into the family of God today.

What I want us to do is to pray together. To pray in preparation for response. "How am I going to respond today?" Let's normalize responding when we come together, praying together, looking to one another.

We're going to have people in every room at every campus for you to pray with. We're going to have people online who you can interact with. Don't leave this moment without taking what you are struggling with and handing it over to God.

Would you pray with me?

God, we thank You so much for today. We thank You for who You are and the craziness that we can come to a space like this and to speak and for You to listen.

And, God, we know that You know every hurt and every pain every laugh every worry. And, God, a lot of times we laugh because we are trying not to cry because we feel hopeless. So, God, I pray right now that you would show Your people that there is hope to be found, that there is more to their story than what they are seeing in front of them. There is more of You to be known.

God, I pray for vulnerability in these times to come for us to be able to hand over what we're having a hard time believing. God, I pray for all of those who have never placed their faith in you, that today would be that day that they would go all in.

God, let this be a moment of response where You get all of the glory. All of this comes by faith through grace. In Jesus' name: Amen.