

Follow the Faith of Father Abraham

⊕ Full faith and credit (vv.1-5)

⊕ Gracious promise guarantee (vv.13-17)

In the name of Jesus, the promised Seed of Abraham, dear children of the promise:

Did you ever hear of someone paying off his mortgage, then continuing to make payments for the rest of his life anyway? What about someone knowing he was named as First Beneficiary, changing his identity to avoid ever being located as the sole heir to an huge fortune? Or what about this scenario? Someone finds the winning lottery ticket, hears the numbers repeated many times in the news, but burns the ticket and never tells anyone. Ridiculous – all three, right? But that, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, is the absolute insanity of our self-righteous, work-righteous sinful nature and the “Do-it-yourself spirituality” so popular in the world today. And this is why we need the Holy Spirit’s wise and empowering counsel to **Follow the Faith of Father Abraham**, first of all, for...

⊕ Full faith and credit (vv.1-5)

You might think that only a Jewish person like Paul could consider Abraham his ancestor. But even biologically, Abraham was the father of many nations besides the Hebrews. More importantly, Paul has already informed us earlier in this letter to the Roman Christians: *“A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man’s praise is not from men, but from God.”* (Romans 2:28f NIV) This concept was as old as God’s Law through Moses who said in one of his final sermons: *“The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.”* (Deuteronomy 30:6 NIV) God’s promise of salvation was aimed all along at God’s chosen nation of Israel to shine as a beacon to the rest of the world. We need this praise from God.

A *full faith and credit* clause backs the currency and monetary system of these United States of America. Used to be we could only talk about such loss of wealth in the abstract from stories told by our grandparents about the Great Depression. But even if this is not as bad as then, God is still giving us some up close, and personal lessons in the way a series of decisions can wipe out so much wealth in such a short time. The Lord’s counsel through Paul to young Pastor Timothy clarifies this wisdom: *“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”* (1 Timothy 6:17-19 NIV)

Father Abraham by any measure was truly *“rich in good deeds,”* the way he helped his neighbors and protected his relatives. In a civic sense Abraham was the fine upstanding citizen we need in our neighborhoods and government and schools. Humanly speaking, he had bragging rights, *“but not before God.”* That’s the part that throws us off our high horse. The Scriptures clearly say, *“Abraham, believed God, and it was credited to his account as righteousness.”* (NETNT) If you’ve ever held a job and looked forward to pay day, you know very well it’s not your boss just being nice. That check is signed, sealed and delivered because he owes you. Your wages are protected by law. But wages are not what God owes us for our breaking His Law, *“for the wages of sin is death....”* (Romans 6:23 NIV)

Abraham’s God, the one, true and only LORD God, is free to do whatever He wants, even as He says here, *“[He] justifies [acquits] the ungodly.”* That’s a strong term equivalent to an unbeliever on the

wrong side of God. From God who is holy, righteous and true, we deserve nothing but damnation for our impatience, irreverence and lies. Every time we argue, we're just lying that someone else is worse than we are. Yet God writes something far better than a lottery ticket in His Gospel of **Full faith and credit** forgiveness. He signed it with His own innocent blood. By a gracious gift He credits your account in heaven as one who does not work, but trusts God for the inheritance of everlasting life.

This may all seem so academic until you hear stories or experience some of those "unfair" things in life. You played by the rules, paid your dues, did your best and still lost your job. Is God being "unfair"? What about the son of that WELS pastor who was riding in a car with fellow college students? He was the only one wearing a seatbelt. They all walked away from the crash. Today, he is a quadriplegic in a wheelchair bed controlled by a "joy stick" at his fingertips. Is that what you call "fair"?

In the early 2000's one Minnesota family lost three sons in an auto accident. Another family lost all three daughters driving to their brother's wedding rehearsal. Both accidents were caused by drunk drivers. How was it that instead of talking about fairness, both families used the opportunity to praise God for hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ? The mother of three daughters sang at their funeral.

In real life God teaches us that "fair" would punish us for our sins. But grace, God's undeserved love, punished our sins on Jesus who volunteered to take our place under the wrath of God. ***"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*** (Romans 6:23 NIV) **Full faith and credit will Follow the Faith of Father Abraham.** Sunshine or shadow, we have God's...

✚ Gracious promise guarantee (vv.13-17)

Remember back in the 1970's how we were going to reduce our dependence on foreign oil? Out West they were extremely upset that the Federal government threatened to withhold highway dollars for any state that did not lower the speed limit to 55 mph. Try it sometime in Nevada, Wyoming or Montana. Try no more than 55 all the way to the Canadian border. You'll see why Montana came up with a plan. The way I heard the story, it cost \$40 to process a parking ticket, but Montana set the top ticket at \$5. Sometime before then end of the year they started pulling people over to issue \$5 speeding tickets. When they got their quota, they got their US highway money. And every body went on their merry way.

It won't work on God's highway. In life's wilderness where God makes the desert bloom with grace and blessings in Jesus Christ our Savior, the prophet Isaiah foretold: ***"A highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it."*** (Isaiah 35:8 NIV) In Revelation, the Holy Spirit inspired John to carry the thought to its devastating conclusion: ***"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."*** (Revelation 21:8 NIV)

Too fast, too slow, anything but right – how can you pay God's fine with your eternal soul? No law, no violation. Impose the law, and punishment must follow. ***"For the Law brings God's anger on us; but where there is no Law, there is no breaking of the Law."*** (NETNT) If the fine is paid, you're free to go. **Follow the Faith of Father Abraham,** and your fine is paid by the blood of God's own Son.

Imagine Jesus beside you with the trophy scars still in His hands and feet where they nailed Him to the cross, in His side from the soldier's spear. You're trying to stay on the road, but the wavy lines are fading fast. Isn't it time to pull over? As the church sign up the road said, "If Jesus is your co-pilot, trade places." Jesus won for us the free gift of God's grace to live and love and cry, even die in the sure and certain hope of everlasting life. We have God's **Gracious Promise Guarantee** because the blood of Jesus Christ paid the price to wash our sins away. The Father's love has thrown heaven's gates wide open. The God of the Bible ***"makes the dead live and...calls into being that which does not exist."*** Like baby Isaac who brought laughter to aged Abraham and Sarah. Like Jesus Christ who makes our hearts sing. The Creator who said, ***"Let there be light,"*** calls into existence our good works to tell our neighbors this inheritance is big enough for them too. Cash the ticket every day. Trust in Jesus all the way. Amen.