

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

March 12, 2017

“Faith”

[After the Scripture Reading, please show the video, *“Worst Case Scenario”*.]

The video humorously presented three concluding statements, (pause) which are some important components of Faith.

(PAUSE) One is “Don’t be anxious about tomorrow.” A second is “God will take care of your tomorrow too.” The third concludes – trusting or faithing in God – you overcome

anxiety and fear – the worse case scenario –
by living “one day at a time.” (PAUSE)

With Faith in God’s Agape Love, (pause)

you, I, and all people (pause) are liberated

from bondage to those worse case

scenarios! (PAUSE) Yes, we have all

observed and maybe experienced, some of

those nuggets of reality, which lend support to

our nightmares and terrors. (PAUSE) Living

with Faith – Trusting in God’s Agape – Self-

Giving and Sacrificial Love for us, (pause)

enables each and everyone of us (pause) to stand up to, face, and endure (pause) over all of our anxieties, griefs, and fears. (PAUSE)

Paul used the example of a Father of the Hebrew, Christian, and Islamic Faith Traditions – Abraham, (pause) as a powerful illustration of a person of Faith – someone, who lived Faith and experienced the Agape Loving Relationship with our Divine Parent. (PAUSE) Paul wrote in **verse 3**, “*The*

scripture says, ‘Abraham believed God, and because of his faith (pause) God accepted him as righteous.’” (PAUSE)

“God accepted him as righteous.” (PAUSE)

Now, frequently religious folks understand those words to mean Abraham earned righteousness – obtained God’s forgiveness (pause) by believing in the right things about God. Some supposed literalists might actually slip and repeat the tried and true formula,

(pause) saying, Abraham confessed his sins, repented, and accepted Jesus as his personal Lord and Savior. (PAUSE) Except, of course, (pause) Jesus did not come on the scene for over 1,900 years! (PAUSE) **An important part of Paul's point was (pause) Abraham did not earn Forgiveness, (pause) God's Agape Love, or the Relationship with God. Instead, (pause) Abraham lived out the Almighty's Gift of Faith – the Trusting Relationship with the Creator of the**

Universe! (PAUSE) Faithing – living in
Trust in God’s Agape Love, (pause) Abraham
realized (pause) he was welcomed into his
Faith Relationship with God. (PAUSE)

The Apostle made that point when he wrote in
verse 5, “*But those who depend on faith, not
on deeds, (pause) and who believe in the God
Who declares the guilty to be innocent,
(pause) it is this faith that God takes into
account (pause) in order to put them right*

with Himself.” (PAUSE) Living Faith is being in God’s Agape Love – is the experience of the Extravagant and Radical Hospitality of our Divine Parent! (PAUSE)

When viewing this next video, I am a little self-conscious about my affinity for science fiction, especially Star Trek. [Please show the video, “*Faith Refocused*”.] The video asks us to consider, “On Whom does it make the most sense to place your greatest faith?” (PAUSE)

Pushing aside any pretense that our answers to that question can be mere make believe, (pause) the presenter continued, “Anyone who has a right relationship with God, and quite honestly, anyone, who doesn’t, (pause) knows (pause) He is the Only One capable of doing what He says, the Only One with the knowledge of the future, the Only One Who understands everything, the Only One Who really knows you, and the Only One Who has revealed through nature and His Word Who

He is and what He's done, how much He
Loves you, and why He is the Only
Completely Trustworthy One there is.
(PAUSE) Got it? Good.” (PAUSE)

Now, I'm sure the author of that video would
not be totally happy with my views on the
subject of Faith but (pause) I agree with him
that there is only One Who is Completely
Trustworthy and Who has revealed (pause)
how much Agape Love this One has for you

and me. (PAUSE) The Apostle Paul also lifted up God’s Trustworthiness, (pause) as he wrote about the connection between God’s Promise and Faith. **He explained in verse 13 that God had “*promised Abraham and his descendants* (pause) *that the world would belong to him*”.** Paul then wrote in **verses 14 and 16-17a, “*For if what God promises is to be given to those who obey the Law,* (pause) *then faith means nothing* (pause) *and God’s promise is worthless. ... And so* (pause) *the***

promise was based on faith, in order that the promise should be guaranteed as God's free gift to all of Abraham's descendants — not just to those who obey the Law, but also

(pause) to those who believe as Abraham did.

(PAUSE) For Abraham is the spiritual father of us all; as the scripture says, 'I have made you father of many nations.' (PAUSE) So the promise is good in the sight of God, in whom Abraham believed". (PAUSE)

Paul utilized the example of Abraham's faith and his relationship with God (pause) to argue against his fellow Jews, who wanted to exclude non-Jews from the Divine Parent's Promises. (PAUSE) They claimed radically following Jewish Law was the only true source of winning or earning a relationship with the Almighty. (PAUSE) In the verses of our Scripture (pause) we are not told how one receives this Gift of Faith, although there is a strong inference of its source in the latter

portion of verse 17, “ — *the God Who brings the dead to life and Whose command brings into being what did not exist.*” (PAUSE) It was no coincidence that Paul connected bringing “the dead to life” and bringing “into being what did not exist.” (PAUSE) For example, in the Gospel of John, we find testimony that Jesus the Christ – the Word made flesh – a human being (pause) was raised from the dead and was the way God created the Universe, Light, Truth and Life.

(PAUSE) We receive the Gift of Faith (pause)
when we come to hear, receive, or learn the
testimony (pause) God's Son, Jesus the Christ,
was sent by our Divine Parent to manifest
God's Agape Love for us – for all people.

**(PAUSE) Jesus was sent to prove God has
forgiven everyone because of the
Almighty's Constant Agape Love for
humanity and Jesus did that by dying and
being raised for us! (PAUSE) That Good**

News means (pause) we are able to have Faith
(pause) that the Still Speaking God (pause)
Forgives, Invites, Welcomes, Heals, and gives
us New Life in Christ (pause) because of
God's Agape Love and Grace! (PAUSE)

This Gift of Faith means (pause) we trust –
faith (pause) God Agape Loves us and
continues to look after our welfare, so, as our
opening video revealed, we have no reason for
anxiety and fear! (PAUSE) Now, we come to

actually living out our Gift of Faith. (PAUSE)

The “Faith on a Wire” video (pause) reminds

us of the courage it takes to put our Faith on

the line – to live it. [Please show the video,

“Faith on a Wire”.] Our Divine Parent has

given us the Gift of Faith (pause) by bringing

us to Trust – Faith in God’s Agape Love and

Grace for us (pause) through the

demonstration of the Divine Parent’s Agape

Love (pause) in the Death and Resurrection of

God’s Son, Jesus Christ. (PAUSE) Now is

the time for us to get on board – to get in

Christ's New Life – his wheel barrow!

(PAUSE) Of course, it is up to each of us to

discern (pause) how we will demonstrate our

Faith in Action but (pause) deciding to not get

in the New Life in Christ of living agape love

is not a choice, if we are to Faith. (PAUSE)

For some it includes becoming a member of

Round Grove United Church, United Church

of Christ. (PAUSE) For all of us, (pause) it

means frequently coming together to join in

our Worship Celebrations, Study, Fellowship,
and Service. It includes financial
commitments and the dedication of significant
portions of our time, talent, and energy (pause)
for God's Purposes through this congregation.

**(PAUSE) It also includes actively living
agape love in our daily lives. (PAUSE)**

**Let's show God's Agape Love to those in
need of support, healing, and
encouragement. (PAUSE) For some of us it
will mean volunteer work to help others. For**

some it will include our actual occupations.

For some it will include joining in protests for justice and mercy. For some it will mean greater political involvement. (PAUSE)

Regardless the specifics, everyone is called to rejoice in our New Faith Relationship with the Still Speaking God (pause) by living it out in our Faith Community and in our daily agape loving lives. (PAUSE) **Trust – Faith, obey agape love, and keep on faithing!** Amen.