

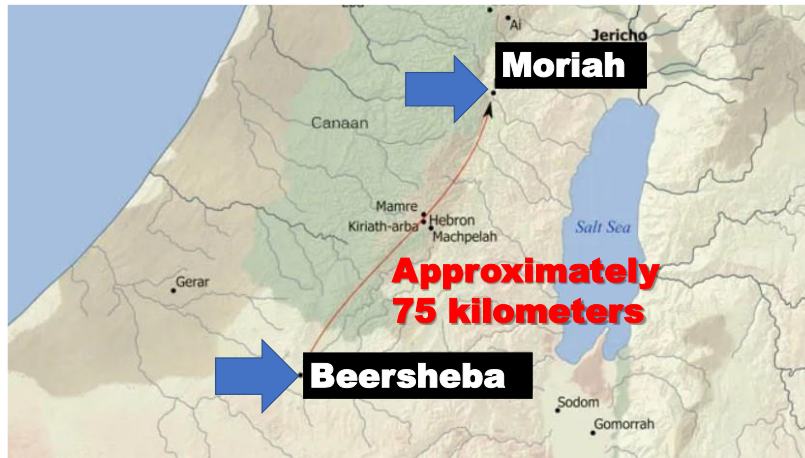


- I am fully persuaded that Jesus pursued after me as a teenager, and he did so, in order to save my life and to call and commission me to be a servant of his.
- I am fully persuaded that I will live on this earth until God's purposes for me are fulfilled.
- I am fully persuaded that God will make all things new.

What about you?



It took Abraham three days to walk from Beersheba to Mount Moriah.



What do you think he thought about during those three days?
What did Abraham talk about with Isaac, knowing that God had asked him to sacrifice his son?

When the prophet Jonah was asked by God... to do the unthinkable, do you remember what Jonah did?

He ran away.

But Abraham didn't.

Step after step after step... he journeyed with Isaac to Mount Moriah.

When he could see in the distance where God had told him to go, Abraham stopped and told his two servants to wait, while he and Isaac went on alone to worship God.

Remember... the wood, the fire and the knife indicated that their worship of God would involve a sacrifice.

While we might wish otherwise, the passage in Genesis 22 does not make known to the reader what Abraham thought about as he made his way towards Mount Moriah.

But in Abraham's story which we have studied; the story told from Genesis 12 through to chapter 22, we are able to conclude, that along with waiting on God for 25+ years... this was the most difficult thing Abraham ever did.

ON September 12, 1962, at the Rice University Stadium, President John F. Kennedy said:



**But why, some say, the moon?
Why choose this as our goal?
And they may well ask, why climb the highest mountain?
Why, 35 years ago, fly the Atlantic? ...**

We choose to go to the moon.

We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard,

**because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills,
because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win...**

President Kennedy said...

"We choose this... not because it is easy, but because it is hard."

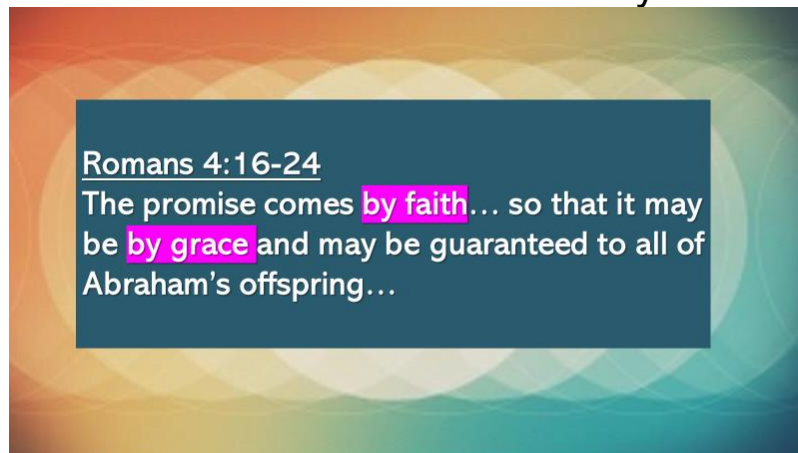
I've heard one of my daughters say repeatedly to her children, "We do hard things. We do hard things because we can."

What we see in Genesis 22 is Abraham choosing to do, not what was easy, but what was unbelievably hard. But here I need to clarify something.

During those three days he journeyed to Moriah, Abraham did not dig deep into himself, and there discovered a reservoir of courage.

Rather, he focused his thinking, his life, his hope, his future and that of Isaac's... upon who the LORD is.

Look at what Romans 4:16-24 says:



The promise spoken of... refers to what? God's promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12 – **“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”**

What was guaranteed to all of Abraham's offspring?

The blessing of the coming Rescuer... who would come into the world because of grace and whose rescue would be received by faith.

Romans 4:16-24

As it is written, 'I have made you a father of many nations.' He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed –

the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

When God made this promise to Abraham in Genesis 17, he was ninety-nine years old, and Sarah was eighty-nine.

At that point Sarah's womb was dead.

For his promise to Abraham to be fulfilled, God had to resurrect Sarah's womb.

At this same time, God told Abraham he was to name his son Isaac... speaking of the boy as if he had already been born, even though he wasn't yet conceived.

Romans 4:16-24

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.' Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead – since he was about a hundred years old – and that Sarah's womb was also dead.

At ninety-nine years of age, Abraham considered the facts – Sarah's womb was dead, and of himself... his body had aged to the point that he was as good as dead.

The facts, when considered said... there was no chance, absolutely none... that the promise of God could be fulfilled.

But God had repeatedly revealed himself to Abraham, and in light of who he knew God to be, Abraham believed God, and dared to hope that God would bring about what he had promised him.

Romans 4:16-24

Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

When he interacted with God in Genesis 17, and God assured him that next year Isaac would be born, Abraham laughed, not in doubt, but with joy, because he was... fully persuaded... that God had the power to do what he had promised.

Abraham's faith was strengthened how?

By his ongoing interaction and fellowship with God.

Romans 4:16-24

This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness.' The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness – for us who believe in him who raised Jesus from the dead.

Genesis 15:6 says that God credited Abraham with righteousness because he believed God.

But Abraham is not unique in this regard.

In the great story of God's rescue, which the Bible tells, God credits righteousness to all who believe... he raised Jesus from the dead.

I believe the night before Abraham left Beersheba, he thought upon his previous experiences with God and the truth which had been revealed to him regarding the character and the ability of God.

I believe as he made his way to Mount Moriah, he continued to think upon who the LORD is...

The Names of God	El-Elyon	– Genesis 14
	Adonai	– Genesis 15
	El-Roi	– Genesis 16
	El-Shaddai	– Genesis 17
	The Judge	– Genesis 18
	El-Olam	– Genesis 21

- El-Elyon (the Most High God) Melchizedek
- Adonai (the Sovereign God) the making of covenant whose terms rest all on God
- El-Roi (the God who sees me) wherever I am
- El Shaddai (the Lord God Almighty) who names us and marks us as his own - circumcision
- The Judge of all the earth who does what is right
- El-Olam (the Everlasting God) who has no beginning and no end

The evidence of Scripture confirms to us that Abraham's thinking was not governed solely by his feelings, though he would have experienced deep emotion, but was shaped by his relationship with God.

It was the truth of who God is that ultimately enabled Abraham to reconcile the seeming contradiction he faced between what God had promised to him and what God commanded of him.

This is why he could the seemingly impossible.

Hebrews 11:17-19

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice.

He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from the dead.

Abraham obeyed God... by faith.
He believed... that God knew what he was doing, even if Abraham didn't.

After he had built the altar, placed the wood, bound his son, and then put Isaac on the altar, Abraham raised his hand in which he held a knife... and was fully prepared to plunge it into his son's heart.

It is important to recognize that his faith was not a blind or misplaced faith, but rather a rational faith.
How do we know this?

Look again at the last sentence.
What did Abraham do?
Abraham reasoned.
What did he reason?
He reasoned that God could raise the dead.

I remind you of the verses we just read in Romans 4.
Probably fifteen years earlier, Abraham had witnessed, firsthand, God's resurrecting power demonstrated when he brought Sarah's dead womb to life.

As he walked to Mount Moriah and thought deeply upon the character of God and God's request of him, Abraham's thinking, guided by God himself, brought him to but one conclusion... and was why, in obedience, he climbed Mount Moriah.

Abraham told his two servants, 22:5:

Genesis 22:5

**We will worship
and then
we will come back
to you.**

Abraham reasoned that the only way by which God could be true to the promises he had made to him... that through Isaac all peoples of the earth would be blessed... and the only way Abraham could obey God... was if ... God raised Isaac from the dead.

Abraham was able to reason this... and then take action... was because he had meditated upon the character of God as he walked towards Mount Moriah.



To empty



To fill

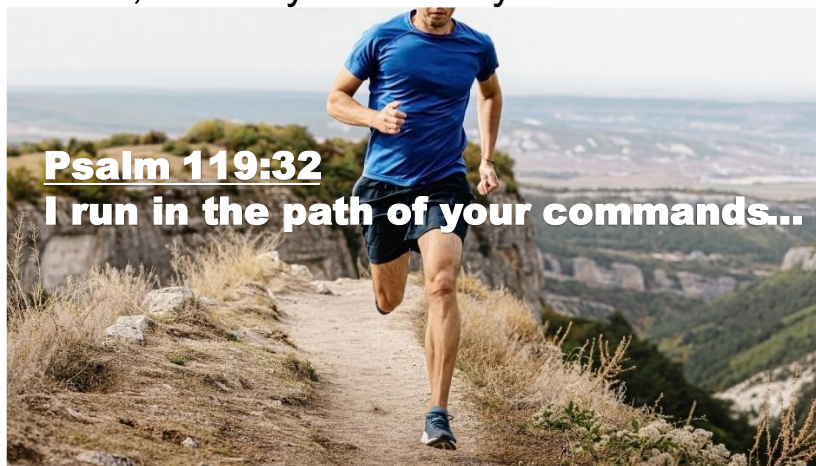
Biblical meditation does not endeavor to empty the mind, but rather, to fill it with the truth of God's person and ways.

As we think, so we are.

And as we are, so we speak and act.

The process by which God transforms a person, as he did Abraham, is not by changing how they feel, but by renewing how they think, which will, in turn change their emotions.

These particular words found in Psalm 119 had not yet been written, but they accurately describe what Abraham did.



Without question, Abraham's faith in God was strong. But the crucial emphasis made in this passage.... that makes all the difference to this life and the life that follows deathis not the strength of our faith, but the strength of the One in whom our faith is placed.

Our hope is in... the strength of the One who saved us.

Abraham believed in El-Elyon, Adonai, El-Roi, El-Shaddai, The Judge of all the earth, El-Olam... who is the God who raises the dead.

This is who we follow, who we love, who holds our lives in his hands.

You would think this truth would be easy for a follower of Jesus to hold onto... when we face challenges or are tested.

You would think this truth would profoundly shape how we go about our day to day lives... cognizant that our Risen Jesus has made his home in us and is always with us, even in the darkest times.

But our default is to forget.
Our default is to live by sight.
Our default is to trust in ourselves.

Living by faith in the triune God who raises the dead...
... is counter intuitive.
This is why God patiently teaches and trains us.

Look at how God trained the apostle Paul and his team.

2 Corinthians 1:8-9a

We do not want you to be uninformed about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia.

We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life.

Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death.

God had directed Paul and his team to go to Asia.
But in Asia they faced repeated hardships... that were so difficult that they believed they would die.

The decision before them... not just once, but again and again... and the decision before each of us when such times visit us, is whether we will continue to trust and obey God, and keep in step with him...or run away.

How can we stay on the narrow path which Jesus spoke of?
How can we do the hard things God asks of us?

There came a point when God revealed to Paul and his team, and through them to us... why the hard things that happen as we follow Jesus... happen.

2 Corinthians 1:9b-11a

But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves, **but on God, who raises the dead.**

He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us.

On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers

It matters to God that you and I learn to rely upon Him who raises the dead.

This is who leads our lives.

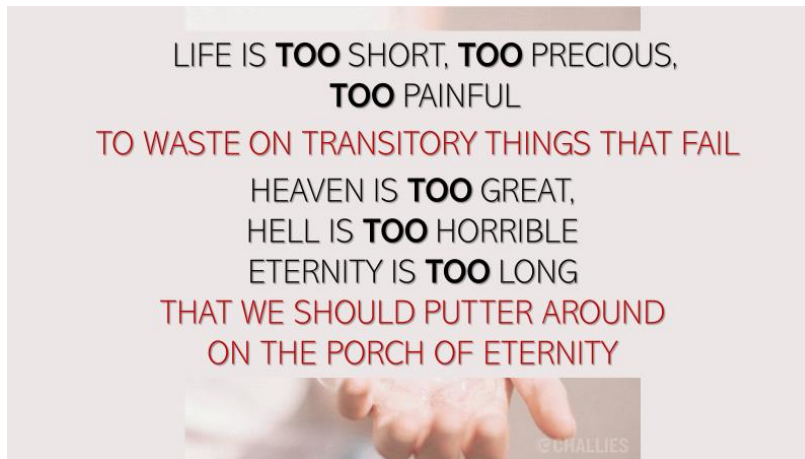
He who saved us will not forsake us.

All that touches our lives first passes through his hands.

And he is the God who raises the dead.

This truth of who God is, shapes, not only our trust of God, but how we spend our lives in his cause.

John Piper explains...



I don't know about you, but I need the LORD to regularly remind me of who he is... for I am prone to putter around... to occupy myself with the insignificant... to spend my energies on that which is trivial.

What about you?

I need God to impress upon my heart and my mind and my will, again and again, that I have been saved for the glory of God... and that I live for his pleasure.

Is it the same for you?

Our lives are not our own.
We belong to the One who brought our dead spirits to life.
There is nothing which the triune God cannot do.

That means then... if He places us in difficult circumstances, at the very least, it is because he is training us to trust in him who raises the dead.

What other gods have risen from the dead?
Only the tomb of Jesus is empty.
What other gods raise the dead?

What other gods transform a person from the inside out and promise those who follow them... resurrection?

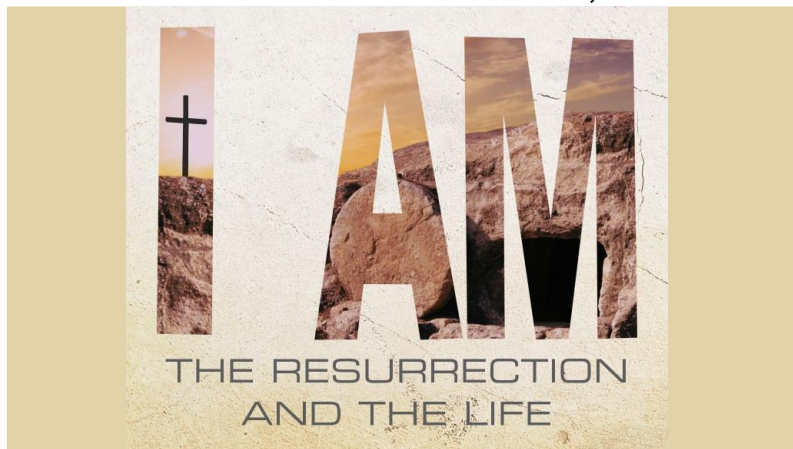
Salvation is found in no one else.

There is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

Jesus alone is the Savior of the world.

His resurrection proves it.

Jesus who revealed the Father, said...



This is who we follow....the God of resurrection.

2 Corinthians 1:9b-11a

But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves, but on God, who raises the dead. **He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and **he will deliver us.****

On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers.

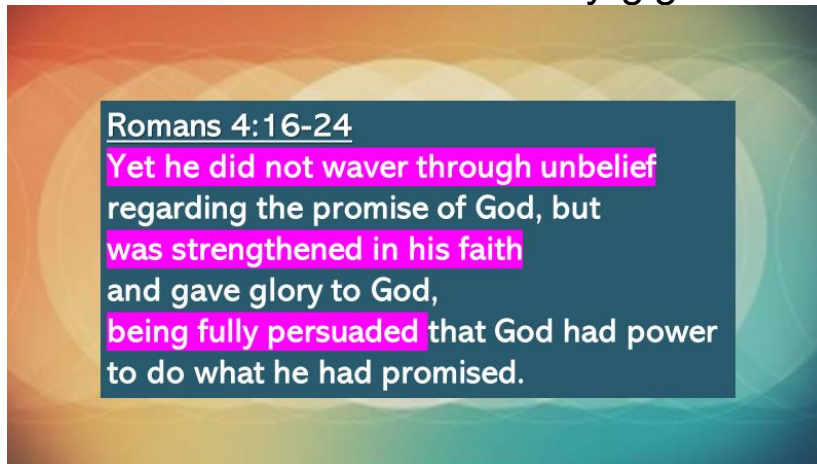
He has... and he will continue... to come to your help.

Therefore, take heart.

Find courage in him.

Set your hope upon him.

If your feelings are ruling your heart and suggesting, even insinuating that God is impotent...if unbelief is making you waver... like one of those whirly-gigs at the Broomhill park...



...then, right now, ask the Spirit of God to strengthen your faith... that you might be... not just partially, but fully persuaded... that God has power to finish in you what he began... power to see you through the challenge you are facing... and through to the end.

He who called us to himself... is faithful.
He cannot fail.
We follow the God who raises the dead.