**Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16**

**1** When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, **2** that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” **3** Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, **4** “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. **5** No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. **6** I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. **7** And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. **15** And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. **16** I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

**Romans 5:1-11 (ESV)**

**1**  Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. **3** More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. **6** For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— **8** but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **9** Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. **10** For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. **11** More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

**Mark 8:27-38 (ESV)**

**27**  And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” **28** And they told him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” **29** And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” **30**  And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. **31**  And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. **32** And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. **33** But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” **34** And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. **35** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. **36**  For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? **37** For what can a man give in return for his soul? **38** For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

**“Safety In God’s Promising Word”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Lent draws out various themes that hide beneath the surface of life. One that has always been especially troubling is shame. People in small towns have a harder time dealing with this compared to those in big cities. Plenty of things, as we know, also get buried away in families, which tends to create many heartaches. In an age where image seems to matter more than anything else. People even attempt to have two different lives. One they create online and another for everyday life. If we could sum it up, shame is that feeling from something dishonorable or improper done before others.

No wonder plenty of shameful people came to Jesus seeking His mercy! This was a shocker to the disciples, but not to the God who came to save sinners. Of course during Lent, there is another kind of shame. It has nothing to do with our image, but with God and His Word. Jesus warned everyone not to be, “ashamed of me and of my words” as He proclaimed His cross. Likewise, throughout the Old Testament being ashamed of God came from suffering what He said. David felt this shame from Saul before he became king. Noah waited many years before The Flood actually came. Abraham was the “Father of faith,” because his future was never in his hands. God promises to carry any through the crosses of life, so none needs to be ashamed of Him and His Word because He is not ashamed of us.

1. **Abram had already found a way to remove the cross he had to face.**
2. By the time he reached the age of ninety-nine, twenty-four years had passed since God called Abram.

* The promised future of offspring as being numerable as the stars of heaven was off to a rough start.
* God’s word brought shame, so Abram and Sarai turned to their own resourcefulness for comfort.
* It lead to Abram sleeping with Hagar the servant girl, which brought forth the birth of Ishmael.
* Even after God appears to renew His promise, the ninety-nine year old Abram responds in verse 18, “Oh that Ishmael might live before you!” God said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac” (Genesis 17:18-19).

1. We try to cut corners as Abram did.

* Our demand on life tend to go off in different directions from trusting what God says, especially when suffering.
* Abram did his own thing against God, Peter boldly rebuked Christ, and we have our solutions on how to make what God promises better.
* The downside to all this is a path saturated in fearful anxiety trying to manage everything about life as if we were God.
* Let alone, such desire from within proves you don’t trust God and maybe we are more ashamed of what He says than what we want to admit!

1. **Yet, when God comes to Abram He was not ashamed to speak better promises.**
2. “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.”

* Abram was far from blameless as he fell on his face, but God had better promises to be received by faith that would not put Abram to shame.
* His name would be changed to Abraham, “The Father of many nations” and Sarai became Sarah since this multitude began with her being the mother of Isaac.
* In their old age God was going to work a miracle proving his promise to Abraham and removing the disgrace of His Word.
* More essential, the everlasting covenant God made exceeded the glory of Isaac for in Abraham’s descendants would come God’s Son, the Savior.

1. When we also come to worship, God Almighty calls us to “be blameless” before Him so that His Word would be alone our promised blessing.

* Confessing our sins is not merely a Lent thing, but the life of Christians because God our Father wants us to hear forgiveness from His Son.
* Absolution delivers this promise and allows us to receive God’s Word trusting how it is good for life and our salvation.
* Luther tells us, “For we were not created like oxen and asses; we were created for eternity. Therefore when God speaks with us to give a promise, He is not speaking with us for the sake of temporal things only…No, He wants to preserve our soul from destruction and to grant us eternal life”(LW Vol. 3)
* The everlasting covenant from God is now the new covenant established by Christ at the Lord’s Supper where the fruitfulness of His sacrifice still pours out forgiveness.

1. **God keeps His promises in Christ, since He is not ashamed of the cross.**
2. Jesus is more than what Abraham could have ever imagined from his descendants.

* He did walk blameless before His Father in heaven fulfilling the Law and declaring Himself to be God’s promise made flesh for all people.
* Where we have weak faith and many doubts Jesus is bold to say, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”
* Christ removed our shame by His suffering and death proving, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
* His resurrection guarantees the shame of sin, death, and Devil will not stand against God and His Word.

1. Christ carries any through the crosses of life.

* By baptism into His Name, God changed your name to be blessed before Him joining you to the multitude of the saints who have gone before us.
* Suffering God and His Word is upholding it now before the crucified Jesus for He is the hope that does not put us to shame.
* This everlasting covenant is beyond any earthly descendants of Abraham, but for all nations and peoples who believe God is for us in Christ.

Abraham at an old age of ninety-nine had to consider God’s unbelievable promises of a son from Sarah. It also worth considering how Billy Graham died last week at ninety-nine. This famous Christian Evangelist shared the Gospel far and wide, but his future came from the same word of grace God gave Him. The promises of God fulfilled in Jesus is why we stand upon him for life and salvation. God promises to carry any through the crosses of life, so none needs to be ashamed of Him and His Word because He is not ashamed of us. Amen. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.