

The God of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob: Faith that Refuses to Quit

Dr. John Carmichael

[Rom 4:16-22 NASB95] 16 For this reason [it is] by faith, in order that [it may be] in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, 17 (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, [even] God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. 18 In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE." 19 Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; 20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. 22 Therefore IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

- Everyone loves a testimony, but very few people enjoy the process that produces one.
- We celebrate Abraham as the father of faith, but we often forget how impossible his situation appeared. God promised him descendants as numerous as the stars, yet year after year passed without fulfillment. Abraham grew older. Sarah remained barren. Every natural indicator said the promise would never happen.
- Yet Abraham became the father of many nations because he learned a powerful lesson: God's promises are not limited by human circumstances.
- Many people today are standing between a promise and its fulfillment. The doctor has given a report. The family situation seems impossible. The finances are strained. The dream appears delayed.
- Romans 4 shows us how Abraham believed God when everything visible contradicted what God had spoken.

What characteristics of Abraham's faith enabled him to receive God's promise despite impossible circumstances?

Romans 4 reveals four powerful characteristics of a faith that refuses to quit.

I. Faith That Refuses to Quit Believes God's Promise More Than Its Circumstances

- a. [Rom 4:19 NASB95] 19 Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb;
- b. Abraham was not living in denial.
- c. He knew: His body was old. Sarah was barren. Time was running out.
- d. Faith is not pretending problems do not exist.
- e. Faith acknowledges the facts but refuses to allow the facts to have the final word.
- f. The facts said: Too old. Too late. Too impossible.
- g. God said: You will have a son. You will become a great nation. Your descendants will be countless.
- h. Abraham chose to magnify God's promise above his circumstances.
- i. Application: The doctor's report may be real. The financial challenge may be real. The broken relationship may be real. But God's Word is more real than any circumstance.
- j. Faith does not deny reality; faith recognizes that God is greater than reality.
- k. [Num 23:19 NASB95] 19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

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II. Faith That Refuses to Quit Does Not Stagger at the Promise

- a. [Rom 4:20 NASB95] 20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,
- b. The word "staggered" carries the idea of wavering, doubting, or being divided.
- c. Abraham faced reasons to doubt every day. Every birthday reminded him of his age. Every passing year reminded Sarah of her barrenness. Yet Abraham refused to let uncertainty become unbelief.
- d. Faith Is Not the Absence of Facts. Faith is not blind optimism. Faith is not positive thinking. Faith is confidence in God's character.
- e. The question is never: "How big is the problem?" The question is: "How great is our God?"
- f. Application: The enemy works hard to get believers to stagger. He whispers: "Nothing is changing." "It will never happen." "God has forgotten you."
- g. But Spirit-filled believers answer with the Word of God.
- h. [2Co 5:7 NASB95] 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight--

III. Faith That Refuses to Quit Becomes Fully Persuaded

- a. [Rom 4:21 NASB95] 21 and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.
- b. This is the climax of Abraham's faith. He was not partially persuaded. He was not mostly convinced. He was fully persuaded.
- c. Abraham's confidence was not in: His age. His ability. Sarah's ability. Favorable circumstances.
- d. His confidence was in God's ability.
- e. Faith rests upon two unchanging truths:
 - i. God Always Keeps His Word - If God said it, He will do it. If God promised it, He will perform it.
 - ii. God Has the Power to Fulfill What He Promises - God never makes a promise He cannot keep. What God initiates, God completes.
- f. Application: The atmosphere for miracles is created when believers become fully persuaded. Many receive partial answers because they maintain partial confidence.
- g. But miracles often occur when believers reach the point where they say: "I don't know how God will do it, but I know He will."

IV. Faith That Refuses to Quit Believes in the God of the Impossible

- a. [Rom 4:17 NASB95] 17 (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, [even] God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.
- b. Paul identifies two attributes of the God Abraham trusted.
 - i. God Gives Life to the Dead –
 1. Abraham's body was as good as dead. Sarah's womb was barren. Yet God brought life where there was no life.
 2. Throughout Scripture God specializes in resurrection. Dry bones live. Dead dreams revive. Dead ministries flourish. Sick bodies recover. Lost people are saved.
 3. We serve a resurrection God. There is no situation too dead for Him.
 - ii. God Calls Those Things Which Be Not as Though They Were –
 1. God sees the finished result before the process begins. Before Abraham had a son, God called him the father of nations. Before Gideon won a battle, God called him a mighty man of valor. Before Peter became a preacher, Jesus called him a rock.

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2. God often speaks prophetically into our future. He declares what will be before we can see it.
 3. Faith agrees with what God says rather than what circumstances say.
- **Faith that refuses to quit remains fully persuaded that God will do what He promised regardless of what circumstances say.**
 - The story of Abraham is not merely the story of one man. It is the story of every believer who stands between a promise and a fulfillment.
 - The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has not changed. What He promised, He is still able to perform.