

Fully Persuaded
Dr. John Carmichael

[Rom 4:17-21 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. 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.

- "I have prayed. Now how do I stand?"
- It is one thing to pray with confidence at the altar. It is another to wake up the next morning and find that nothing visible has changed. The report is the same. The need is the same. The waiting continues.
- Abraham lived in that space between a word from God and the fulfillment of that word. Paul tells his story to explain the kind of faith by which people are counted righteous before God. Abraham's faith was directed toward the God who gives life and keeps His promise (Romans 4:16–17).

How do we stand in faith when God's promise and our circumstances seem far apart?

Abraham shows us how: face the facts with faith, give God glory while you wait, and stay persuaded that God is able.

- I. **Face the facts with faith — [Rom 4:18-19 NASB95] – 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;**
 - a. God had promised Abraham that he would become the father of many nations. Yet Abraham was about a hundred years old, and Sarah was unable to conceive. Paul says Abraham considered these facts. His faith did not require him to ignore his body or Sarah's condition. He weighed their situation in light of what God had spoken.
 - b. The phrase "hope against hope" captures the tension: ordinary human expectation gave Abraham little reason for hope, but God's promise gave him a reason to keep believing.
 - c. Faith can look the facts in the face and still believe God.
 - d. **[Gen 17:15-19 NASB95] – 15 Then 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 indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be [a mother of] nations; kings of peoples will come from her." 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear [a child?]" 18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" 19 But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.**
 - e. **[Heb 11:11-12 NASB95] – 11 By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at**

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that, [as many descendants] AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.

- f. Application: Acknowledging a diagnosis, a financial need, a strained relationship, or a long delay is not a failure of faith. Then ask: What has God actually said that I can trust in this situation? Let His Word shape prayer and action.
- g. Abraham did not build his faith on a favorable report. He built it on a faithful God.

II. Give God glory while you wait — [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,

- a. Paul connects Abraham's strengthening faith with giving glory to God. His praise expressed confidence in the One who had made the promise. The fulfillment had not yet become visible, but Abraham could honor God for His faithfulness and power.
- b. Giving God glory is more than repeating a phrase. It means recognizing who He is while the situation remains unresolved.
- c. Your circumstances do not have to change before your praise begins!
- d. [Psa 34:1 NASB95] – 1 [A Psalm] of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed. I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
- e. [Hab 3:17-19 NASB95] – 17 Though the fig tree should not blossom And there be no fruit on the vines, [Though] the yield of the olive should fail And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls, 18 Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. 19 The Lord GOD is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds' [feet,] And makes me walk on my high places. For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.
- f. [Phl 4:6-7 NASB95] – 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- g. Praise is how I give God glory in the middle of the story, not only at the end.

III. Stay persuaded that God is able — [Rom 4:21 NASB95] – 21 and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.

- a. Paul identifies the object of Abraham's assurance: what God had promised, God was able to perform. Abraham's confidence did not rest on the intensity of his feelings. It rested on the ability and faithfulness of the God who had spoken.
- b. Verse 17 makes this clear. God is the One who "gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist." Abraham believed that God; he did not create the promised future through the power of his own words.
- c. The promise is as dependable as the God who made it!
- d. [Gen 18:14 NASB95] – 14 "Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."
- e. [Luk 1:37 NASB95] – 37 "For nothing will be impossible with God."
- f. [Heb 10:23 NASB95] – 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;
- g. Application: When discouragement returns, come back to the promise and to the Promiser. Pray again. Continue obeying. Take the wise steps available today. Do not use a difficult morning as the measure of whether God is able.
- h. I may not know when. I may not know how. But I know the One who made the promise.

IV. The gospel center of Romans 4

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- a. Romans 4 is about being justified by faith. Paul goes on to say that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness, and that this was written for us who believe in the God who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead (Romans 4:22–25).
 - b. The God who raised Jesus is able to keep His word. Our first response to Him is faith in Christ.
 - c. Abraham had a particular promise from God about a son and descendants. We can learn from how he trusted God, while grounding our own confidence in what God has actually promised us in Scripture.
 - d. To the hurting person, delay does mean a lack of faith.
- **When the facts appear to contradict God's promise, faith faces those facts honestly, gives God glory while waiting, and remains persuaded that He is able to do what He has said.**
 - Abraham faced the facts. He gave God glory. He remained persuaded that God could perform what He had promised.
 - Return to the question: "I have prayed. Now how do I stand?" "Stand with your eyes open to the facts, your voice lifted in praise, and your heart anchored in the God who is able."
 - The answer to waiting is not pretending the waiting is easy. It is continuing to trust the God who speaks, gives life, and raised Jesus from the dead.