

## Believing in Hope Against Hope

### Introduction

- Throughout the NT Abraham is presented as an example or model for believers.
- Abraham is a model of faith leading to justification & making him the father of all believers (Rom. 4:3, 11; Gal. 3:29).
- Abraham is a model of faith that is demonstrated by acts of obedience to God (Jas. 2:21; Heb. 11:8-19).

### I. The Basis of Biblical Faith (v. 21)

#### A. The promise of God

*God gave the promise of a son directly to Abraham (Gen. 12:2; 17:15-16). Abraham was fully convinced about the promise, even though he had times when his faith was weak (Gen. 17:17-18). Struggling or even weak faith is still faith & is not unbelief (Lk. 17:5-6)!*

#### B. The power of God

*A reminder of God's limitless power strengthened Abraham's faith when he was struggling (Gen. 18:14). No natural limitation of man can prevent the limitless power of God from fulfilling His promise (Lk. 1:37).*

**APPL:** Every believer should be fully convinced that God is able to do anything that He has promised in the word or by the Holy Spirit.

### II. The Obstacles to Biblical Faith (v. 19)

#### A. Deadness

*Abraham did not deny reality – his old age (100 yrs.) & natural inability to become a father. Believers should not deny natural weaknesses – old, young, unhealthy, poor, etc. Personal weaknesses should not prevent a believer from trusting the promise & power of God. He waited 25 years; we may have to wait much longer than expected. But time does not affect the promise & power of God!*

#### B. Barrenness

*Abraham did not deny the reality of Sarah's weaknesses – her old age & natural inability to become a mother. Natural weaknesses of those who want to help should not prevent a believer from trusting the promise & power of God either.*

**Abraham learned not to trust human ability or inability, but to put his trust in the promise & power of God that never fails!**

**APPL:** A believer can honestly face weaknesses in everyone's life (including their own) & never lose faith in God's plan/purposes.

### III. The Nature of Biblical Faith (v. 18, 20)

#### A. Believing in hope (v. 18)

*The phrase "against hope" means that there was nothing natural to give Abraham confidence – youth, health, etc. Godly hope (ἐλπίς) means looking forward to something good with confidence. The basis of this confidence is faith in God & His word – this is not wishful thinking or optimism that things will turn alright, but certainty (Heb. 6:18b). Abraham believed God & His word regardless of the natural obstacles & impossibilities.*

#### B. Complete trust (v. 20)

*The word "waiver" (διακρίνω) means to be divided in one's mind or thinking – maybe God can do this or maybe not. Abraham never accepted the possibility that God was unable to keep His promise. Abraham's faith grew stronger as the test became more impossible – he had to trust God completely & not his own body or Sarah's. Therefore God was worthy of all the praise for what He would do – nothing for Abraham to boast about (MIRACLE)!*

**ILL:** When a parent is teaching a child to walk, swim or ride a bicycle, words & hands are very important. Words instruct the child in what's expected & encourages them to trust. Strong hands give hope that the parent can compensate for the child's weaknesses.

**APPL:** The same is true in the kingdom of God. The child of God receives instruction, promises & encouragement to trust God. God makes Himself & His limitless power available to compensate for all of the believers weakness. We can overcome & persevere in faith.

## CONCLUSION

My beloved brothers & sisters we can and we must follow Abraham's example of believing in hope against hope. Struggling in our personal weaknesses & with the weaknesses of believers helping us is still struggling in faith & hope. Struggling with old age, poor health, lack of money, inexperience, etc. is still struggling in faith & hope. Struggling means that we have not given up; the flame & fire of the HS is still alive in us; faith & hope in Christ is still alive in us; determination & perseverance is still alive in us; anticipation of God working all things together for good is still alive in us. And the longer we struggle & persevere, the stronger our faith will grow. The weaker we become, the less confidence we'll have in ourselves & more confidence in Jesus will develop. And the more confidence that we have in Jesus, the more we will praise the Lord because of our **help** comes from Him; all of our **faith** is in Him; all of our **hope**...; all of our **joy**...; all of our **peace**... Never give up on the promises of God...

If you are not a Christian, you have hope today also. That hope is in Jesus Christ who lived a sinless life for you & who a sinless death for you. Jesus satisfied all of God's demands for perfection & all of God's demands for people who have sinned – everyone has sinned & everyone needs a Savior. Jesus will be your Savior if you believe...

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