

**The Greatest Letter Ever
When It Looks Hopeless
Romans 4:16-25**

Introduction: The World Record Holder

Question: What do you think about Paul's example of Abraham's faith that focuses in on one particularly challenging part of the promise made by God that Abraham would be a father of many nations? If you were Abraham, would the results have been the same?

*Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations...
(Romans 4:18)*

Mark Twain: "Faith is believing what you know ain't so" (Pudd'nhead Wilson)

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. (Romans 4:16)

Abraham's View of God

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 into being things that were not. (Romans 4:17)

1. Abraham understood God gives life to the dead
2. Abraham understood God can create out of nothing (ex nihilo)

Abraham's View of Obstacles

Note: Having faith doesn't eliminate obstacles. The obstacles can be daunting. They were for Abraham.

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed... (Romans 4:18)

There were two huge obstacles:

- The biological impossibility of having a child
- The staggering enormity of the promise

Abraham's Challenge: He faced the facts and his faith stayed strong

Abraham's Response: He laughed, but he still believed God

Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!" (Genesis 17:17-18)

Abraham's Test: The Sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22)

Abraham's View of What Matters

Abraham gave glory to God (vv. 20-21)

He... was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God... (Romans 4:20)

... being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. (Romans 4:21)

Abraham valued the righteousness from God (v. 22)

This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." (Romans 4:22)

Conclusion: Our View of God Is What Matters

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 our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. (Romans 4:23-25)

We Learn:

1. Genuine faith is strengthened when we must wait on God's promises to be fulfilled
2. Genuine faith is directly proportional to our knowledge of God

Question: How big is your God?