

"Old Age; Young Faith"

Romans 4

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connect groups

PATH

Our skin may wrinkle but our faith never has to. Abraham's faith was vibrant and youthful even when he was nearing one hundred years of age. As Paul points to the patriarch Abraham as an example for justification by faith, we can learn what it means to believe God through all the ages of life. How vibrant is your Christian faith? Have you let cynicism and doubt choke out your confidence in God?

I. Abraham's Faith Exhibited (vv. 1-15)

II. Abraham's Faith Explained (vv. 16-17)

III. Abraham's Faith Examined (vv. 18-25)

A. He Believed God Can Do Anything (vv. 17-18)

B. He Believed Circumstances Aren't Everything (v. 19)

C. He Believed Challenges Are Nothing (v. 20)

D. He Believed Promises Mean Something (v. 21)

POINTS

Abraham's Faith Exhibited (vv. 1-15)

- A firm faith makes someone attractive at any age.
- In the first three chapters of Romans, Paul talked about justification through faith in Jesus Christ. In chapter 4, he presented Abraham and David as examples of faith.
- In verses 1-5, Paul referred to Genesis 15:1-6, when God took Abraham stargazing. Abraham was childless at eighty-six years old, but God promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars.
- Abraham believed God, and God accounted Abraham as righteous. *Accounted* is a banking term; Abraham was bankrupt before God, but because he believed, God credited his faith.
- One of the themes of the New Testament is that sinful man can be made right with God through faith in Jesus Christ. You're only as old as your doubt; if you want to stay young, say *amen* to God's promises.

Abraham's Faith Explained (vv. 16-17)

- In verses 16-17, Paul explained the principle of faith (see also Ephesians 2:8).

- Abraham was the prototype of salvation by faith, so everyone who believes shares the same lineage, and are children of faith.
- Believers aren't saved through works; it is God in Christ who saves. God's gift of salvation is tied to His grace. We must simply believe to receive.

Abraham's Faith Examined (vv. 18-25)

- He Believed God Can Do Anything (vv. 17-18)
 - Abraham factored the Lord into life's equation, believing He could and would accomplish His will and purpose.
 - We often project our own limitations onto God. We need a perspective adjustment, so that we can see God for who He is.
- He Believed Circumstances Aren't Everything (v. 19)
 - Natural impotence is no match for divine competence. Abraham wasn't thinking about the frailties of the flesh, but the faithfulness of God.
 - With the birth of Isaac, Abraham became the "father of multitudes." God fulfilled His promises to Abraham and Sarah.

- He Believed Challenges Are Nothing (v. 20)
 - The word *waver* in verse 20 means to vacillate; Abraham struggled in his faith (see Genesis 16:1-4, 15-16; 17:17-18). But a struggling faith is not the same as a doubting faith (much like temptation to sin is not the same as sin). Abraham put his faith into action and was "strengthened in faith" (v. 20).
- Abraham's faith began by believing God's words; faith comes by hearing God's Word (see Romans 10:17).
- He Believed Promises Mean Something (v. 21)
 - God's promises are as good as performances; they will happen.
 - Abraham was circumcised, then said *amen*. Abraham's faith followed God into the future.
 - What you believe about God is the most important thing about you; it determines what you think, how you act, and everything else in life. So, stand on His promises through faith.

PRACTICE

Connect Up: Though we can see the handiwork of God in creation, we can't physically see God. Having faith in God is like trusting in the laws of physics to get a plane in the air. According to Hebrews 11:1 and 6, why is faith vital for belief in God? Knowing is not enough, nor is conviction. We must receive—by faith, through God's grace—the promises of God in Christ. Discuss why each of the following kinds of faith is important in our relationship with God:

- *Notitia:* The content of faith; the knowledge and information of what we believe.

- *Assensus:* The conviction that the content is true.
- *Fiducia:* Personal trust, reliance, and assurance; saving faith.

Connect In: How is faith communicated and lived out in the church? Here are some areas to discuss:

- Worship: How does faith inform worship?
- Service: How should faith influence how we serve others?
- Evangelism: How can faith affect how we reach out to others with the gospel?

- Doctrine: How should faith influence the teaching of the Bible?

Connect Out: How would you explain to an unbeliever the role of faith in the Christian life? Knowing that all people have faith in something, how can you direct an unbeliever's faith in self, science, money, power, etc., to faith in God?