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Developing A Faith That Nourishes and Sustains

Romans 4:16-25

Introduction

1. All of us have good days and bad days in life.
 - a. We have those days when everything is going well and life is good.
 - b. We also have those days in which nothing seems to go right. Days in which we wonder, "Will this day ever end?"
 - c. There are those of us who find ourselves blessed with more good days than bad.
 - d. Then there are those of us who wonder why we are plagued with more bad days than good.
2. Regardless of where you find yourself in all of this, there is a question I would like for all of us to consider: "What sustains you in your life?"
 - a. What gives you that extra pep in your step?
 - b. What lifts your spirit when you are down?
 - c. What provides you with strength when you are weak?
 - d. What gives you hope for the future in spite of the obstacles you may encounter?
3. God teaches us that it is our faith which gives us this hope.
4. It is our faith which sustains and nourishes our souls.

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5. The example which the apostle Paul sets before us of such faith is none other than Abraham, the one referred to as . . .
 - a. "the father of the faithful"

"Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of

Abraham” (Galatians 3:7, NASB95).

- b. “the friend of God” (James 2:23).

“and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God.”
(James 2:23, NASB95)

3. It is because he believed God and trusted him with every aspect of his life.
4. Today, I want you to trust the God of Abraham — the God who is the Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
5. My goal is for you to have a faith which will not shrink, no matter what obstacles come into your life.

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I. The Object of Our Faith (v. 17)

A. GOD

1. The object of Abraham’s faith — God.
2. Not just any god, but “God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist” (v. 17b).
3. The object of our faith is very important — we will never benefit from our faith if it is placed in the wrong object.
4. Abraham’s faith does not stand out because of its own intrinsic strength, but because its object was God.
5. All of us have faith — the question is, where do we place the faith we have?

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B. OUR GOD . . .

1. “gives life to the dead” (v. 17a).
 - a. Prior to this point in history:
 - 1) There had been no recorded resurrection.

- 2) Neither had God revealed any doctrine of resurrection.
- b. But Abraham believed in God's resurrection power.
 - 1) This is proven to be true when he obediently raised the knife to take Isaac's life.
 - 2) He knew that if Isaac died, God could resurrect him (cf. Genesis 22:5).
 - 3) "He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type." (Hebrews 11:19, NASB95)
2. He saw God as a God who "calls into being that which does not exist" (v. 17b).
 - a. God creates *ex nihilo*, from nothing.
 - b. When you take into consideration what Paul says in verse 19, some suggest that God restored Abraham and Sarah's procreation process.

"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;" (Romans 4:19, NASB95)
 - c. For all practical purposes, God created Isaac *ex nihilo*.

Slide 5**C. WHAT IS YOUR CONCEPT OF GOD?**

1. Do you consider Him to be a little god?
 - a. Doesn't operate in His world.
 - b. Can't intervene on behalf of his people.
 - c. Unable to answer our prayers.

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2. Or, is He a great God?
 - a. Nothing escapes His notice.

"You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
You understand my thought from afar.
You scrutinize my path and my lying down,

And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.
Even before there is a word on my tongue,
Behold, O Lord, You know it all.”

(Psalm 139:2–4, NASB95)

b. He listens to us and responds to our prayers.

(**David**) “The Lord is near to all who call upon Him,
To all who call upon Him in truth.
He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him;
He will also hear their cry and will save them.”

(Psalm 145:18–19, NASB95)

c. He speaks and it happens.

“By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,
And by the breath of His mouth all their host.”

(Psalm 33:6, NASB95)

“For He spoke, and it was done;
He commanded, and it stood fast.”

(Psalm 33:9, NASB95)

3. Two questions for us to consider:

- a. Is God the object of our faith?
- b. If so, how do we perceive Him?

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II. The Obstacles of Faith (vv. 18-20)

A. ABRAHAM FACED TWO OBSTACLES

- 1. The biological impossibility of a child due to his and Sarah’s age.
 - a. Sarah was ninety and he was almost 100.
 - b. He was impotent, and Sarah was barren.
 - c. Abraham’s faith was not a faith which ignored the facts.

- 1) “Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body” (v. 19)
- 2) He took every relevant factor into consideration.
- d. Abraham weighed the human impossibility of becoming a father at his age against the God in whom He believed.
- e. He decided that with his God, nothing is impossible.

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2. The staggering nature of the promise that he would become “a father of many nations” (v. 18).
 - a. In Genesis 17:6, when Abraham was 99 years old, God said to him, “I have made you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you.”
 - b. When Abraham was in his early 80's God had said to him, “look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them . . . So shall your descendants be” (Genesis 15:5).

Slide 9**B. OUR RESPONSE TO THE OBSTACLES WE FACE**

1. The nature of our faith determines how we respond to the obstacles we encounter in our lives.
2. If God is who He says He is, then none of His promises will fail because
 - a. *He forgets us*
 - 1) God doesn't forget us.
 - 2) When the people of Isaiah's day complained that God had forgotten them, He responded . . .

“Can a woman forget her nursing child
And have no compassion on the son of her womb?
Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.
“Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands;
Your walls are continually before Me.”
(Isaiah 49:15–16, NASB95)

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- b. *Our situation is beyond His power.*
 - 1) Later, when Sarah laughed at the Lord's statement that she would

bear a child in her old age, He asked, “Is anything too difficult for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14, NASB95).

- 2) In the days of the prophet Jeremiah, with King Nebuchadnezzar and his army bearing down upon Jerusalem, God instructed Jeremiah to buy a piece of land about 3 miles north of Jerusalem as a sign that the people would return to the land following their captivity.
- 3) When Jeremiah seemed to doubt, God said to him, “Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?” (Jeremiah 32:27, NASB95)
3. The problem for many of us is that what we say we believe about God and what we truly believe is not the same.
4. Our tendency is to rely upon ourselves more than we trust in God.
 - ❑ One factor which determines how much we trust in God over the obstacles in our lives is this, “how long is our worry list?”

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III. The Objective of Faith (vv. 20b-22)

A. TO GLORIFY GOD

1. In verse 20 Paul writes that Abraham “grew strong in faith, giving glory to God.”
2. Important: *God is never glorified in our lives apart from faith — our full reliance upon Him.*
3. Abraham’s life glorified God in a way that few others have because he demonstrated a faith unlike many others.
4. In verse 21, Paul describes Abraham’s faith telling us that he was “fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.”
5. Our goal is to glorify God in the same way.

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B. RIGHTEOUSNESS

1. Verse 22 gives us the result of Abraham’s faith — “it was . . . credited to him as righteousness.”
2. Faith that makes us righteous before God is a faith which . . .

- a. Recognizes the immensity of our God who creates from nothing and gives life to the dead (v. 17).
 - b. Does not deny the existence of obstacles, but evaluates them in the light of God's Word and power (vv. 18-20)
 - c. Is fully assured that what God has promised, He will bring to pass (v. 21)
 - d. God Credits to us for righteousness (v. 22)
3. Faith is the only way that any of us will ever be righteous before God.

Conclusion

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1. Notice the last three verses of this chapter (vv. 23-25).

“Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.” (Romans 4:23–25, NASB95)

2. This declaration that Abraham's faith was credited to him for righteousness isn't just written for Abraham's sake, but for ours as well.
3. We, too, can be declared righteous by God.
 - a. We can enjoy promises as great as those made to Abraham.
 - b. We can enjoy the privilege of not just being called “a friend of God” but “sons and daughters” of God.
4. One day you and I will be the recipients of “an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2 Corinthians 4:17).
5. In order for this to take place, we must believe in . . .
 - a. God our Father “who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead” (v. 24b).
 - b. Jesus our Savior “who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification” (v. 25).
6. Do you believe?
7. Are you willing today to act upon that belief?