

Jumbo Sized Faith - Romans 4:19-24

by Jon Courson

We can exercise childlike faith by trusting in God's promises, giving Him glory, and leaving our situations in His hands.

Scripture: Romans 4:19

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Salvation By Faith"

Description

Jon Courson emphasizes the simplicity of spirituality, drawing from Matthew 18:3 where Jesus teaches about becoming like little children to enter the Kingdom. He highlights Paul's message in Romans that salvation is a free gift based on faith, not works, using Abraham as an example of unwavering faith in God's promises. Courson delves into four key elements of Abraham's faith: not focusing on limitations, not lowering expectations, giving God glory, and fully trusting God with the situation, encouraging listeners to have faith like Abraham and believe in God's power.

Transcript

We seem to have a terrible tendency to over complicate spirituality. Knowing this, Jesus shared with us that we must become as little children if we want to enter into the Kingdom (Matthew 18:3). This doesn't mean we're to be childish in immaturity, but child like in simplicity.

In the Book of Romans, Paul was shockingly simple when he wrote that our salvation is based not upon some esoteric understanding or something we should be doing -- but that it is a free gift founded not upon behaving but upon believing, not upon trying, but upon trusting, not upon doing, but upon what Jesus has already done.

Was this some bizarre, new doctrine Paul was preaching, some New Age revelation, some secret understanding? No. In Romans 4, Paul said, 'This is not something new -- it's the way it was meant to be from the beginning,' as he went all the way back to Abraham and used him as an example of one who was justified by faith.

Look at Romans 4:19-21, and note four elements of Abraham's faith which are vital for you and me . . .

Abraham did not look at his limitations.

And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. Romans 4:19

At the age of 86, Abraham received the promise that he and his wife, Sarah, would have a child. Fourteen years later, at the age of 100, Abraham still believed God would honor His Word. Reproductively, his body was dead. Physiologically, Sarah had been barren all the days of her life. But Abraham didn't consider the frailties of his flesh. Instead, he counted on the faithfulness of his God.

You who are wondering why God's promise has not been fulfilled in your own life, take hope and know this: There is almost invariably a time gap between the promise of God and the performance of God. Why? So that the Lord can prepare you for what's coming. Therefore, don't look at your limitations because you will be sure to find all kinds of them.

When the spies went in to check out the Promised Land, they discovered a land which flowed with milk and honey, and brought back grapes as big as basketballs. 'What a fabulous land it must be!' the people said. 'Yes, it is. But there's a problem,' said all but two of the spies. 'There are giants in the land, and in comparison to them, we are but grasshoppers,' (Numbers 13:33).

Do you feel as if there's a giant facing you -- a financial, vocational, relational problem looming large before you? Take your eyes off your limitations and put them on the One Who is limitless, for your problems are but grasshoppers compared to the One Who spans the universe between His little finger and His thumb (Isaiah 48:13).

Abraham did not lower his expectations.

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith. Romans 4:20

'Abram', the original name given to Abraham, means 'Exalted Father'. Thus, for the first 100 years of his life, Abraham must have had his fill of taunts like, 'Hey, Exalted Father, how many kids do you have?'

But it got worse when, at 100 years of age, the Lord told Abram he was to change his name. Abram must have initially breathed a huge sigh of relief until he learned his new name was Abraham, or, 'Father of Many Nations'. Yet he didn't stagger. He didn't say, 'I refuse to go by that name. Call me Father Wannabe.' No, he said, 'Call me Father of Many Nations. It's going to happen.'

Abraham gave God adulation.

. . . giving glory to God. Romans 4:20

Here's a real key to faith: I find that faith comes and fear flees when I give God glory. I can be struggling when I come into the Sanctuary, or when I head up to the mountaintop. But when I start worshipping, my faith begins to grow. That is why worship is so important. Not only does it bless the Father -- it feeds our faith.

When Jesus arrived at Jairus' house, mourners met him outside, saying, 'Don't bother going in. His daughter is dead.' 'She's not dead,' Jesus said. 'She's sleeping,' -- a reply which caused the mourners to 'laugh Him to scorn', (Luke 8:53). What did Jesus do? Luke 8:54 records that before He healed Jairus' daughter, He dismissed the mockers.

I love this story because it helps me understand a very real principle with regard to faith. You see, whenever the Lord gives you a promise in the Word, there will be those who laugh, saying, 'You can't claim that promise. You don't understand it contextually. You don't have the proper background

linguistically. You just don't get it theologically.' And what are you to do at that point? Do what Jesus did. Get rid of the mockers. How? Do what Abraham did. Start exalting, extolling, and praising the Lord -- and the mockers will leave.

Abraham handed God the entire situation.

And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. Romans 4:21

Abraham knew that if God promised, it was up to Him to perform. So often I try to figure out how He's going to do it. 'OK, God, how is it going to happen?' I ask. Not Abraham. He was fully persuaded that what God had promised, He would perform.

'Good for Abraham,' you say. 'I'm glad Paul used him as an illustration of faith, and that we sing songs in Sunday School about his faith. But I'm not Abraham. I falter frequently, stagger easily, and fail constantly.' Wait a minute. Abraham failed too.

When God gave him the promise initially that he would have a son, Sarah's response was 'You've got to be kidding, Abe. I'm 76 -- and barren on top of that! God must have meant for you to have relations with my handmaiden, Hagar, and call the child from that union ours.' Abraham agreed -- and the Jews in the Middle East are paying the price of his faltering faith to this day.

Why, then, did Paul commend Abraham's faith? Check this out, Bible students: Although the Old Testament tells it like it is, including flaws and failures, tells it like it is, the New Testament never once mentions any shortcoming of any Old Testament saint. Why? Because the blood of the Son causes the heart of the Father to forget the sins of the saints.

Therefore, instead of concentrating on Abraham's failures, Paul commends Abraham's faith. 'But Abraham's faith, flawed as it may have been, is monumental compared to mine,' you say. Wait a minute. On the basis of Romans 4:23-25, if you even believe God raised Jesus from the dead, your faith is every bit as incredible as was Abraham's.

You see, the world doesn't believe in the Resurrection. When Paul addressed the thinkers and scholars on Mars Hill, they listened to him -- until he brought up the Resurrection, at which point they laughed at him (Acts 17:32). Now, if you're a believer, your faith and salvation are based upon the Resurrection. You didn't see it visually. You haven't touched Jesus physically. You haven't heard His voice audibly -- but somehow you believe. And, even though our culture mocks it, science disputes it, people doubt it -- because God has graced you with faith to believe what the world doesn't understand -- anything else you're struggling with is a piece of cake.

It is nothing to believe in victory over whatever giant is before you, whatever pressure is upon you compared to believing in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Jumbo was the biggest elephant in captivity. So powerful was he that he could uproot a full grown tree. Yet when Jumbo traveled with P.T. Barnum's circus, he was secured with nothing more than a twelve inch stake. Why? Because when he was first captured as a baby, he was unable to pull free from the twelve inch stake which held him captive. Thus, he grew up captive. Thus, he grew up accepting the fact that he would never be able to remove the stake. He bought into the lie that he didn't have the strength to pull out the stake.

So too with me and you. Nothing remaining will demand more faith than believing that Jesus is God, that He died for our sins, that He rose again. We're Jumbo. We've already accomplished the incredible. Yet we remain tied to twelve inch stakes when we've already shown we are capable of uprooting trees. 'How will I make this payment?' 'When will I get my house?' 'What will I do if I lose my job?' are all twelve inch stakes compared to the redwood of unbelief which we've already uprooted.

Suppose you ran the Boston Marathon, and a week later, I asked you to jog out to the mailbox a couple hundred yards away to get the mail, and you said, 'I can't. I'd like to -- but I can't. I'm so out of shape. I just can't run that far.' I would say, 'You ran the Boston Marathon -- but you can't jog to the mailbox? What's wrong with you?'

And I think that's what the Lord lovingly says to us. 'What's wrong with you? You have exercised faith like Abraham, the father of all faith. You've already exercised faith of astounding proportion because you have believed that I died for your sin and rose again. So how can you be worried about the phone bill?'

Gang, you are men and women of magnificent faith, following in the footsteps of Abraham. Now use the faith which caused you to embrace the Resurrection to also believe God is going to take care of your present situation. Give Him the glory. Leave it in His hands. Be free. You're Jumbo. Go get 'em!

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