

The Struggle of Faith

by Michael Durham

The sermon emphasizes the importance of growing in faith and striving to have a mature or perfect faith that pleases God.

Scripture: Matthew 17:20

Topics: "Faith Development", "Trust In God"

Description

Michael Durham preaches on the journey of faith using the example of Abraham's struggle to believe in God's promise of a son. He emphasizes the stages of faith from little faith to mature faith, highlighting the importance of choosing to trust God over doubts and logic. The sermon encourages believers to overcome the struggle of faith by doubting their doubts and believing in God's promises, leading to a peace that surpasses understanding.

Transcript

Romans 4:16-22

Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all 17 (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed--God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; 18 who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." 19 And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. 20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. 22 And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Man is born with the capacity to act in faith, but also man is born with a severe case of distrust of God. It has left him unable to have faith in the Almighty. As we have stated repeatedly in this series, everyone exercises faith and even the unbeliever can have great faith but he cannot toward God. Only the Spirit of God can reverse this and He does so in the new birth.

Although the new believer has faith in God and can demonstrate it, he or she does not start out with perfect or mature faith. That's not where we begin on our faith journey. Their faith is weak and small and

must be superintended by the Author and Finisher of faith. He must enlarge it in both scope and capacity.

When Peter began in the school of faith, his faith was nearly microscopic. That is faith smaller than the mustard seed that Jesus talked about. In Luke 5, Jesus commands Peter to launch into deeper waters and cast out his net. Peter does not respond positively, excited that he's about to make one of his greatest catches. He has no idea that the real catch is himself and the fisherman is Jesus and he, Peter, is about to get caught in Jesus' net. He whines, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net" (Luke 5:5). He did not expect to catch anything, not even a minnow. Even the turtles weren't biting that day. But something happened. He did what Jesus told him to do. And although his faith seemed non-existent, he did show faith in Christ by obeying His command to cast out the net. Peter's microscopic faith was rewarded. Remember, faith is acting like something is real, even if you're not for sure. In Peter's case, he was absolutely sure it wouldn't work. But there was something in him that caused him to want to obey Jesus: faith.

A few short years later, Peter's faith grew and blossomed into a faith that produced much fruit. In Acts 3 you see him speaking like Jesus, telling a lame man to rise and walk. You see him resolutely defy the very governing council that had Jesus arrested and executed. And by Acts chapter 9, Peter commands a dead woman named Dorcas to get up, and she does.

What happened? Jesus' school of faith is what happened. Jesus recruited Peter and enrolled him in His school of faith where He supervised and sculpted Peter's faith. He put the ex-fisherman through faith paces that were designed to make Peter fail, and fail enough times until Peter had no choice but to sink or swim. In fact, one lesson of faith had Peter sinking literally in the Sea of Galilee. But eventually, the Lord refined and advanced Peter's microscopic faith until it was a mature faith that could trust God for anything God revealed.

Abraham was in the same school of faith as Peter. His education in faith was beyond elementary or primary grades. He went into post-graduate studies and came out graduating summa cum laude and he's called "the father of faith." But as we will see, Abraham didn't start where he ended. Like Peter, he had some incompletions and failures.

That same school is where you are enrolled today. Whether you know it or not, you have been enrolled in Jesus' school of faith. He is working on you and your faith. Will you, like Peter and Abraham, let Him teach you and grow your faith? Are you willing to fail and be embarrassed as Peter was on several occasions until you understand the faith life? That's what this requires. You must be resolved to pursue the course on faith until you master the material and can exercise a mature faith. It will take scrimmaging, struggling, and striving for your faith to grow. You must not run from but toward the fight of faith.

Faith is in a constant state of flux; it either grows or decreases. It's never static. In 2 Thessalonians 1:3 Paul says, "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly..." In the Thessalonians case, their faith was growing, but a faith that does not grow will weaken. Either your faith is growing or shrinking. But eventually, finally, faith comes to the stage that the Bible calls mature, then faith has been made complete or perfect, and will never diminish, but remain at peace with God in full assurance. That's the goal. That's graduation day.

Before we look at the text, I want to outline for you the upward progress of faith. Or, to say it another way, I want to give you the grades of faith in which you have to pass before you can move up to the ultimate mature or perfect faith. This is the goal our School Master, Jesus, has for you. He will not give up on you

even though you will give up on Him. Some of you may want to drop out altogether but God wants you to graduate with a full and perfect faith.

I. The Six Stages of Faith

A. No Faith.

That's where we all start. As I said a moment ago, we all have faith, whether you're a believer or not, but we're talking about faith in God and we all start with no faith.

"But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed." (Galatians 3:23)

There's a before faith comes and an after faith comes. Before, you have no faith in God. You can exercise faith in something or someone else but not in God. You have to be born again for that. With the new birth comes the gift of faith, a measure of faith implanted within your soul.

B. Little Faith or Microscopic Faith.

Now that you're a believer you have this measure of faith but it starts little. I like to call it microscopic. I want you to understand that little faith is even smaller than a mustard seed.

On several occasions, Jesus rebuked His disciples and said, "O you of little faith..." In fact, "little faith" is often a noun. He's saying, "O you little faiths." "O you microscopic faith believers." It's faith so small that it's barely detected. You hardly notice it. For example, the night they were on the stormy seas and Jesus was fast asleep. They wake Him up and what does He say to them?

But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. (Matthew 8:26)

This is a faith that could not but barely trust God. They had some clue that He could do something but what they didn't know. This was the same kind of faith Peter had when he cast out the nets. He was certain it wouldn't work but he still obeyed and acted like it was true. You really find it difficult to call it "faith," don't you? But it was because he got his catch.

C. Mustard Seed Faith.

Hopefully you don't stay with microscopic faith very long.

So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you." (Matthew 17:20)

It seems like we might say, "Well, if I could get to this grade, I'd be happy." Who needs perfect faith, if you can speak to a mountain and it's going to obey you? But Jesus wants His disciples to know this is not the finish line of faith. Even this mustard seed of faith will struggle and struggle much before it gets to the point where it can believe.

D. Faith.

Plain faith. There are several places in the New Testament where the word faith is ascribed to someone but it's not prefaced with an adjective like "great" or "weak."

Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." (Matthew 9:2)

There is a level that you finally come to in your faith journey where it's not microscopic or a mustard seed but it's abiding faith or it is the gift of faith. I do not mean to confuse you by using all this "faith" terminology. There is a gift of faith mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:9. It's given for a special event and once the faith is exercised it's not there anymore.

For example, the gift of faith--which is what I think these men had--has happened to me many times over the years. But let me give you one story that might illustrate what I'm trying to say about the gift of faith.

Our oldest son was diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis when he was about 5 years of age. I remember after a few weeks of him being diagnosed I was sitting in church on Sunday morning and the Lord spoke to me. I know there are some people who really criticize that terminology that God "spoke to me," but, dear friends, I don't apologize for using those words. I'm not ashamed to say that. I believe the Bible tells me my God is a conversational God and that He desires a conversational relationship with me. I have all confidence that He will never tell me anything that contradicts this Book. This Book is the fence on which I know I can stay safe if I stay within its boundaries.

But God spoke to me and said He was going to heal my son. From that moment, there was no struggle to believe, there was no doubt, there was no wrestling with the devil, there was complete, full assurance. Within a few short weeks, Shelby was completely healed. Nobody ever recovers from juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. It was confirmed by Vanderbilt that he did have the disease. Shelby ended up playing baseball against the son of the doctor who diagnosed him. When we would meet, he would say, "Mr. Durham, if I hadn't been his physician and known his records, I would not believe that he had rheumatoid arthritis."

How did I know that he would be healed? Because God imparted to me a gift of faith. There have been other times when I've prayed for people to be healed and nothing happened. I had no assurance that God would or would not heal them. What was the difference? The gift of faith. I think that's what we're seeing here. Faith imparted for a moment, faith that doesn't wrestle it just knows.

E. Great Faith.

We only see this kind of faith mentioned twice in the New Testament. Both of them are found in Matthew. The first is the centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant, the other is the Syrophenician woman whose daughter was demon possessed.

When you study those two examples, you'll discover what great faith is. It's a faith that goes beyond reasoning and sees what God is able to see without a struggle, much like the gift of faith. There is a level of assurance most people would struggle to achieve. This goes beyond just mere faith. It's able to believe God in ways that just are not logical.

For example, the centurion. His servant is sick and Jesus has been summoned to heal him. The centurion sends another messenger and says, "No, don't come, I believe You have the power that You could just speak the word and he be healed."

When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" (Matthew 8:10)

This man had such a faith in Jesus that he knew Jesus operated under an authority that was greater so that He could just speak the word.

The Syrophoenician woman teaches us something else about great faith. Great faith, when it is resisted, resists back and can believe God no matter the hindrance. Jesus ignores the Gentile woman. The hindrance she receives is not from the devil, it's from Christ. He ignores her pleas and prayers. Then, when He finally gets around to talking to her, He actually calls her a name, He speaks derogatorily and calls her "a little dog," but she will not be put off by that. She still believes.

Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour. (Matthew 15:28)

Great faith is a faith that has been assaulted and tested but endures in spite of resistance. It easily fights the fight of faith.

F. Perfect or Mature Faith.

In James 2, James is talking about Abraham's faith. Near the end of Abraham's life, God commands him to sacrifice his son Isaac in worship. That means to kill his son and offer him up as a burnt offering. There is no struggle, no argument, no doubt. Abraham immediately obeys the Lord in perfect rest, peace, and assurance.

Mature faith is the stage of faith that brings faith to the place God intends. You can believe God for anything He says with full assurance.

"let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith..." (Hebrews 10:22)

We're going to talk about the struggle Abraham had before he got to this perfect or mature faith. Yes, it blesses God that you fight the fight of faith against your doubts and you come through it, even though you still might not have strong faith, it may not even be great faith. It might be microscopic but you come through it and you are able to barely, with fingernails clutching, trust God, and that blesses Him. But it blesses Him more when you're able to rest in full assurance of what He's told you. That's the kind of faith that pleases Him.

If this little, microscopic faith will please Him, how much more will the great, mature, perfect faith? That's where God wants us to be.

It is important to note that not every word from God produces this certainty that something is going to happen. Abraham is a case study in this fact. He heard God but he didn't immediately believe. God had to speak more than once.

Gideon is another perfect example. Just because God speaks to you doesn't mean you automatically believe and have full assurance. In the case of Gideon, he had to struggle until he got to that place. Often God's word creates a struggle to believe rather than a full assurance of faith or a resting kind of faith.

Let's go back to the text. There are different degrees of faith the New Testament speaks of. What God is trying to do in the school of faith with you is graduate you from grade to grade until you can finally come to

a place where your faith is mature. You say, "Well, I don't believe that's possible in this life," oh, my dear friend, it is. It's a command from God for us to have this kind of faith. I am to cooperate with God as He is perfecting my faith. If you don't believe it's possible, you're not going to strive for it, you're going to disobey God, and you'll miss God in so much of your life.

We're not just talking about answers to prayer. We're not just talking about miracles; we're talking about believing God day after day in order to be like Him and live for Him. It takes faith to live for God. Often we relegate faith to the miraculous and prayers being answered, certainly faith is required for that, but you need faith to not have a critical spirit. You need faith in order to be able to bless the Lord when adversity comes. You need faith when your reputation is being challenged and someone is lying about you so that you don't respond out of anger and knock their block off. Don't tell me you haven't felt like that before. We've all felt like that.

It takes faith in God to not react in sin. It takes faith in God to believe that if I read His Scripture prayerfully and meditate on it that He will speak to me. You cannot do anything with God without faith. To labor in the entirety of my Christian life with weak faith or mustard seed faith is nothing more than dooming myself to a very poor Christian experience. More than that, I'm dooming myself to a very poor relationship with Jesus. It will be difficult to hear and experience Him because without faith it is impossible to please God.

Let's look at Abraham's struggle to believe.

II. Abraham's Struggle to Believe God

A. The Apostle Paul Only Shows Us the End Result of Abraham's Struggle.

This is the end not the beginning of the struggle. To get the beginning of the story you have to go to Genesis 17.

The Lord gives Abraham the word about Isaac.

Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her." (Genesis 17:15-16)

This is 13 years after Ishmael. Ishmael is 12-13 years of age at this point and God appears to Abraham and reveals that he and Sarah are going to have a little boy. Watch how Abraham responds to this news. He doubts God and considers the age of his and Sarah's bodies.

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" 19 Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him." (Genesis 17:17-19)

How can you read this and say that Abraham had great faith? I can't even say he had faith or that he had faith the size of a mustard seed. All he had was a little faith that could barely believe. But when you go to Romans 4:19, you seem to read a completely different story.

"And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb." (Romans 4:19)

Okay, Paul, time for you to confess that you re-wrote this. You did the work of a modern liberal revisionist, writing this to your benefit. No, not at all. He's not showing you the progress of Abraham's faith and the struggle, he's showing you the end result, the victory of his struggle in faith. Abraham does struggle to believe. Not only did he laugh, he presented a counter argument to God, "Here, let me give You a better idea. Let, Ishmael be the son of promise."

B. Abraham Struggles to Believe so that God Must Tell Him A Second Time.

"Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. 2 So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground," (Genesis 18:1-2)

Who are these three men? It's the Lord God and two angels. Look at verse 9,

Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" So he said, "Here, in the tent." 10 And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. 12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" 13 And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?' 14 "Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." 15 But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh!" (Genesis 18:9-15)

Let me tell you how I know Abraham is still struggling--this was the first-time Sarah had heard about this. Abraham didn't believe God enough to even tell Sarah what God had told him. He didn't believe it enough to share it with his wife, so God tells him a second time, Sarah hears it, and she laughs also. Sarah struggled to believe what God said, not in a visions or dream, but in bodily appearance with an audible voice.

You say, "If God showed up and spoke to me in an audible voice, I would believe Him." Would you? It didn't help Sarah any. Yet, when you read about this story in Hebrews 11, Sarah's name is mentioned regarding this event.

"By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised." (Hebrews 11:11)

What book are these New Testament apostles reading?! She laughed and then lied about laughing--that doesn't sound like great faith. But, once again, we're not seeing the process of struggling to believe but the end result of having struggled and won, which ought to be encouraging to all of us. Not only do Abraham and Sarah struggle to believe, so do I, so do you. There is struggle in most cases, until you get to the point of perfect faith.

Norman Grubb, the son-in-law of the late African missionary C.T. Studd, in his book *The Law of Faith*, wrote,

There is an element of struggle in our faith, twinges of doubt, a sense of unreality. Our faith cannot genuinely be said to "have" the thing it would reckon on, but rather to be trying to grasp and maintain it against opposition. There is a laboring faith and there is a resting faith. What Jesus called little faith, (Matt. 8:10) for instance, was the action of the disciples in the storm, when He lay asleep on a pillow in the boat and they awoke Him, crying out: "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" The disciples believed that He could save them, but doubted if He wanted to! There was faith, but of a very watery consistency.

Most often, that describes our faith does it not? We have faith in God but it's of a watery consistency that it cannot hold us up. It's mixed with doubt and uncertainty. There is a struggle to believe God. That's where most of us are in the school of faith but I don't want you to be discouraged. You're there on purpose by the hand of your School Master. You're exactly where He wants you to be.

Nobody ever grows their faith to a higher degree or grade without struggle, failure, or wrestling with doubt and uncertainty. This is not strange, what's happening to you. Your faith is not unique so you have trouble believing God. It happened to Peter, it happened to Abraham, the father of faith, and it will happen to you. The very fact that you're struggling to believe God is a proof that you're in His school. Praise Him this morning. Thank Him that He's letting you in and that His entrance exams were low enough to get you in. How much faith does it take to get into God's school of faith? Just enough to get saved. Once you're saved, that's when the lessons start.

The question is, how do I overcome the struggle of faith? This is what I want to conclude with. This is why we've said the rest. This is the best part.

III. How to Overcome the Struggle of Faith

A. The Struggle Begins with the Promise of God.

You can't believe God for anything He doesn't say. If He hasn't told you anything, there is no struggle. But when He takes a promise out of the Bible and make it real in your heart. Or, if He makes an application from His Word to you, that becomes a promise to you. It is at this point the struggle begins. For us to see this, I want to illustrate it.

Let's start with a very basic need. God isn't going to start you on something huge, He's going to start you on something you can handle. With Peter, it was, "Throw your net." He did that way before He ever had them try to feed the 5,000. Let's start with a very basic need and there is nothing you can do to solve that need. It's a financial need. Suppose you have a bill that is due and there is no money to pay it.

Some of you are thinking, "Why do you always use money when you want to talk about faith?" Because it's why God created commerce and why He talked about it so much in relation to faith. I think God gives us the ability to earn, barter, and purchase to teach us how faith works. He creates needs in our lives.

Thus, let's say you have a need--you have a bill that's due and you can't pay it. You can't pay it because of anything you did wrong; you haven't mismanaged your money nor have you been a poor steward of resources. You are need because God has created the need. In the school of faith, in which every Christian is in, every problem, opportunity, or challenge to your faith is God ordained. It is God's lesson prepared by Him. Every difficulty, every problem, every challenge, is God-appointed. It's not about the problem. That's not where the focus ought to be. The focus is on the lesson that the problem is being used to teach.

You've got this very basic need, it's a bill that's due and you don't have the wherewithal to pay, what are you going to do? The first thing you must do is discover if there is a promise of God regarding the need in the Scriptures. Does the Bible address this problem? The Bible does address financial problems. Let's look at one.

"Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things." (Matthew 6:30-32)

If you've got a need that should automatically tell you God has a provision. For every need you have, He has already supplied the answer. This is what you see from Genesis to Revelation. Do you have a problem today? You must remember God has already provided the solution before the problem arose, therefore, what's happening is that God created the need so you could connect with His supply.

Every need, every challenge, is orchestrated by God, created by God. He may use an errand boy, He may even use the devil as the delivery mechanism, but it's still orchestrated by the great Teacher because He's has the provision.

Here is where the struggle comes. You have the need, you have the promise, the struggle will be with doubt.

B. The Struggle is With Doubt in the Promise of God.

This is the struggle. There will always be a wrestling in the mind. Your mind will begin to think that the promise is not for you. "Ah, yeah, that's there in Matthew 6, but that's not for me. It's for the disciples back then."

Or, Satan, the accuser of the brethren, will tell you that you are not worthy or eligible for the answer to the promise. Brother, you better believe that Satan will get involved with the struggle and intensify it. He will fight against you exercising your faith because when you exercise your faith God is active, and when God is active Satan always loses. He's going to oppose you. He's going to be whispering those thoughts. "You're not worthy. Look how you live. You think you're a person of faith that you can claim that promise from Scripture and God has to answer you?"

Or, you will question if your faith is strong enough. Satan will tempt you to look at your faith and doubt that it is sufficient. His strategy is to get your eyes off of Jesus and His promise and get your eyes on your faith. He knows faith in faith does not work. Remember, you don't have to have very much. You've got to use it and struggle through.

You will doubt that this could be the will of God for you. I often find this is where my struggle is most intense. "Is this Your will or not, God? I know what Your Word says but Your means are infinite so maybe you have some other idea going on here? Is this really Your will?" The question invariably comes, "Is this my will or God's will?" It is important that we know something to be God's will and not our own. But the question about God's will can also be a tool of doubt by the enemy.

Beloved, there is enough Scripture to tell you that if you're right with God, your sins are confessed up to date, you're walking in fellowship with Him, then that means you're delighting in Him and He will give you the desires of your heart. Proverbs 16:3 says if you're walking in the presence of God are upright, then He

will actually establish your thoughts, which means God's will can be the thoughts that He implants in your mind. The Bible makes God's guidance less mystical than many think. If you're not getting a check in your heart then the Lord is not saying "no." You need to trust the Lord to the point that you believe that He is capable of telling you "no" if something you are prayerfully considering is not His will. If you sincerely want to be led and directed by the Lord and you're walking in the light as He is in the light, then most likely what you are considering is God's will.

Doubt can take the form of logic as it did in the case of Abraham. You look at the circumstances and you reason with common sense that there is no way that what you think God told you is possible. It is illogical and unreasonable. That's what Abraham wrestled with. "My body is nearly 100, hers is 90, and isn't just because we're drawing Social Security checks that we can't have children, it's also the fact that Sarah could never have children even when she was young." It's illogical. It doesn't make sense.

Another way doubt comes: you will think about what others will think of you if you fail. What if you tell somebody you're believing God for this and it doesn't come to pass? Then you begin to worry about what people will think. Doubt will assault your mind in many different ways.

C. To Win the Fight of Faith, You Must Doubt Your Doubts and Believe Your Beliefs.

It's that simple. Not easy but simple. Another way to say this is that you must choose to trust God and choose not to trust anything else. I don't care if it's a thought or emotion. It is an act of the will. It is a choice. You must choose to trust God. That's what Abraham did.

Look at Romans 4:18. Paul shows us this struggle that Abraham had to come to a point of faith about Isaac.

"who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." (Romans 4:18)

Do you see the word "contrary"? It is the Greek word, *para*, which in this case, as it is used here, means "beyond." Abraham's situation was beyond hope. There's no way biologically they could have Isaac. There's no reasonable solution here. That's what was presented against Abraham's faith.

At some point, Abraham chose to believe in spite of there being no reason to believe, except one--God said it. At some point, he grabbed his heart and said, "This is what God has said. I don't see how it's possible, but I believe. I will no longer believe the doubts, suggestions, or innuendos that tells me otherwise. I'm going to believe God even if I look like a failure, even if I look like a fool.

"And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb." (Romans 4:19)

Why is he trusting? Because he chooses to trust. This is where we've got to come. Yes, it can be scary. You have to get to the point where you're going to believe God even if everyone in the church thinks you're crazy. You must choose regardless of success or failure, sink or swim, live or die, you are not going to doubt God. You refuse to accept as the final fact what you see, hear, or feel.

Why? Because God has said it, that's why. You choose to believe and reject your doubts. When you say, "What if I fail?" God says, "What do you mean? You haven't succeeded yet." When you realize that you have nothing to lose, that's when you'll trust Him. That's why God puts us in such strange extremities--it

gets us beyond our human ability. Most of us would pull out the old credit card and run down and pay off the light bill or whatever the bill was but all we're doing is using human reasoning to help God and ourselves. That's not faith. All that does is postpone it 30 days.

D. The Struggle Will Give Way to Peace.

Once you choose to believe God and say no to the inner doubts and anxieties, the struggle will give way to peace. The battle to believe may still need to be fought after you choose to believe God but if you continue to refuse to listen to the doubts, they eventually stop. God will make sure they stop.

"He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God," (Romans 4:20)

Paul gives us a little glimpse here that there was a struggle. But God strengthened him as he chose to hope against hope, contrary to reason. There was a moment in time when God brought peace. Abraham had won the victory of faith.

When the peace comes, then Satan cannot bother you, friends and family can't bother you, you know that you know that what God has promised is yours. You can, like Abraham, give glory to God. As Abraham fought the fight of faith and chose to trust God, his faith was being strengthened and he came to the place that He could praise God for the answer. That is the rest or peace that comes when the struggle is over.

How will you know when the struggle is over? You'll know when you're not having to fight anymore. The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will take over and where you had little certainty or confidence that God would do something now there is much more confidence and assurance.

How many times I have shut heaven down, did not receive the blessing because I have gotten weary of fighting and began to believe my doubts and doubted my beliefs. I don't want to live the rest of my life like that. I pray you don't want to live the rest of your Christian existence like that because, once again, this affects our relationship and fellowship with Jesus. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him. You say, "Well, we have a sovereign God." Yes, and in His sovereignty, He chooses to let you have a choice about whether or not you'll believe in Him.

Here's what I want you to do. I want you to find a promise. Look at your needs, look at your problems, look at your challenges, and see if there is a Scripture that addresses that with a promise and let God make that promise real to you and then let the fight begin. Wrestle with those doubts and choose to say no to them and at some point, God's going to break through, peace will come, and you will get what you need. That's the way God works and how He always will.

It's the same way for someone who is not a Christian. It works the same way. Some of you have been under conviction for a long time and you want to give your life to Christ but you don't know if you can live the Christian life like others you admire can. My dear friend, doubt your doubts and believe God. How do you do that? You choose to believe. Sometimes the act of faith is nothing more than just choosing to believe and fight your doubts. In this case, faith acts by commitment, the committing yourself to Christ, believing that He will forgive you of your sins and He will make you His child forever. Amen.

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