

Sermon
Elim Community Church
Bath, Maine

Title: An Illogically Logical Faith...

Text: Romans 4:18-21

Introduction: *“Figures can’t lie,” said the professor earnestly. “For instance if one can build a house in 12 days 12 men can build it in one.” “Yes?” interrupted a student. “Then 288 will build it in one hour, 17,280 in one minute, and 1,036, 800 in one second. And I don’t believe they could lay one brick in that time.” While the professor was still gasping, the smart pants went on: “Again, if one ship can cross the Atlantic in six days, six ships can cross it in one day. I don’t believe that either, so where’s the truth in Math?” Then he sat down...*

You can’t always trust statistics. Apply this to issues of faith or religion, then. Science can’t disprove religion, nor can it produce faith. It concerns me when Christians feel the need to find Noah’s ark or try to prove the flood. If you have to try to prove faith, is it still faith? Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things NOT seen, as Hebrews 11 says. So as we look at the story of Abraham today we will see how like Abraham-

We Have an Illogically Logical Faith

The story of Abraham has always amazed me no matter how many times I have heard or read the story... Here is a 100 year old man having a child, well I mean Sarah had the child at 90 years of age... Wow! Not only that she was a hot 90 year old chick.... If you read chapter 20 of Genesis you will find that truth out! What Spa and beauty creams was she using... Both of these points is amazing in themselves, no matter how you look at it they are miracles... but today I want to focus on the miracle of faith that waited 25 years to see the promise fulfilled (Yes, Abraham was around 75 and Sarah was 65 when the Lord spoke His promise to Abraham.)

25 years... is 300 months, 9125 days, 219000 hours, 547500 minutes, and 3,2850,000 seconds of waiting by Faith. Are you listening... they waited 25 years... for the promise!

I wonder how many of us would wait for 25 years for a promise, how about 10 years, 5 years, 2 years, 1 year, 6 months... 1 month, 15 days, 10 days, 5 days, 1 day... how about 10 hours, 5 hours... I think we get the point, at least I hope we do! How many of us would be patient to wait for the Lord to fulfill His perfectly planned promise for our lives. How many of us would begin to change our tune: “Oh, I misunderstood what the Lord was saying” or “I missed what God was saying” or “It was meant for someone else...” I believe the difficulty with the Church today is that we are circumstantial verses Biblical, we allow the circumstance to determine our Faith verses what the Bible says... It would be a great story if Abraham would have been patient and believed... but,

I. Faith is against the logic of the world

Abraham is called the “father of all believers” in the Scriptures. He is the epitome of what faith is about. The reason is plain. Look at today’s text. It says that, without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God. When Abraham was 99 and Sarah was 89 old, God told them they would have a child. Now, if I told the oldest member of this congregation that he or she was going to have a baby, most people would call me coo-coo. I would imagine that most hundred year olds would also say, “I don’t want a baby now!” But not Abraham. Whereas Sarah laughed with unbelief, Abraham believed God and rejoiced with laughter when he promised Him the impossible. It took great faith to believe such a thing. That’s why Abraham is often called the father of believers.

However, did you know that Abraham wasn’t always such a “strong” man? Way back when Abraham was a ripe 75 years old, God had promised Abraham that he would make him into a “**great nation**” and that “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” However, after this initial promise was made, doubt began creeping into Abraham’s mind. Later on, when God appeared to him in Genesis 15, Abraham said to him, “**O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit c my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?**” And Abram said, “**You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.**” **Abram had reasoned that God must have been speaking figuratively when he said that he would be a “great nation.”** But God reiterated to Abram, “**This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.**” With a visual aid, God told Abraham - go ahead and count the stars! Do you know how long that would take? The Milky Way has 100 billion or so stars in it. At one a second it would take you 33 years to count a billion. Then God gave the punch line that Paul mentioned, “**so shall YOUR OFFSPRING be!**” Wow! What a promise! The father of believers then believed the Lord - that even at such an old age he would really have a son.

However, this is not the end of the story. Sarai got the idea that maybe **SHE WASN’T** included in the plan. So she got the wise idea to give Abraham her slave, Hagar to sleep with - **NOT** a good idea. Listen beloved, whenever we put our finger into the pie, we pollute what God is doing... whenever we think that God needs our help we only make a mess and many times a bigger mess... and I also believe we can change the outcome of what the Lord wants to do! Look at the mess we are in today because of both Abram and Sarai, concerning Ishmael.

Abraham maybe also reasoned that God could have meant just he would be the forerunner of Christ - and not through his GOD GIVEN wife! **So God had to come back to Abraham AGAIN to Abraham, 13 years after this debacle with Ishmael, and set the record straight.** “**As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come**

from her.” There was no room for misinterpretation left. Finally, Abraham fell face down and laughed in pure joy saying, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” God reiterated again, your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac.

Now, my purpose is NOT to badmouth Abraham. I was hoping that maybe this picture of Abraham makes Christianity and “faith” a little more real to you. We have a tendency to idealize Christians as always being hopeful - always able to rejoice in affliction - always upbeat and positive in life. But more often than not we find ourselves looking at things like Abraham did - logically - and getting ourselves in trouble. In order to sin, we have to often times reason ourselves into it. We say things like, “I know I’m not supposed to have sex, but I know we will get married some day, so . . . I know you promise to take care of me Lord, but how am I going to pay the bills . . . I know you say you love all people and want all to be saved, so why do people suffer and go to hell . . .

” A small boy and his sister were riding on the back of the new wooden horse given to them as a present. Suddenly the boy turned to his sister and said: “If one of us would get off there would be more room for me.”

That’s the way our logic often works. We say, “God, I know you tell me to believe in you and do it your way, but my logic sees that life would be a lot more comfortable without you on my horse. So why don’t you just get off of my horse for a while?” Even as Christians, we often question God’s will in our lives.

In the end, Abraham ultimately was able to throw off the fetters of his reason. Whereas every bit of physical evidence told him, “**your body and Sarah’s body are old and well beyond child bearing years,**” he said, “**I believe Lord!**” In laughter he proclaimed, “**will God really grant us a child?**” It was almost too good to be true - but he believed it anyway. That’s what faith is - the confidence that God will take care of you without your parents around. It is the trust that God still loves you when all of your suffering is screaming to you the exact opposite. It is the belief that God created the universe when your science and philosophy professors are using every bit of logic and evidence to prove otherwise. It is the comfort of knowing that in spite of your sin and rebellion you will still end up in heaven. It is against the logic of this world.

II. Faith is completely in line with the logic of God’s Word

Do you have such a hope and faith? How was Abraham able to have it? In the book “Chicken Soup for the Soul” there is the story of Joey who was born with club feet. The doctors assured them that he would never run very well, but they never told him that. So he went out and ran with the children and tried to join the cross country team. He practiced every day, even when he had a 103 degree fever. They never told him he couldn’t run with a fever, so he did. And eventually, two weeks later, Joey made the team. The idea is that anything is possible for those who believe they can. That’s we often hear - “you just need to have faith! Just believe you can do it, and you will!”

Friends, Abraham's faith was not what made Abraham's faith so strong. He didn't have a child because he just believed HE could do it. The NIV translation is terrible as it says, "Abraham believed and so BECAME the father of believers." It makes you think that Abraham wouldn't have been the father of believers if he hadn't had such a great faith. And so preachers will preach that if you want to have the faith of Abraham you have to believe and act on God's Word as Abraham did. In the end, what happens? We are pointed to ourselves and our faith for our strength, and often end up with more doubt and a guilt trip because we don't have babies at old age or get married like we prayed for. Instead of building our faith, it only decreases it.

It's a shame, because that's not what Paul was trying to do. Paul literally states that Abraham in hope believed he would be the father of many nations, right in line with what had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." He . . . did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded, "God is able to do what he has promised."

Notice that throughout these passages that Abraham is the RECIPIENT - the one being PERSUADED and STRENGTHENED - by the PROMISES of God - so that he couldn't waver through unbelief. The truth of the matter is that God made him the father of nations and believers through HIS promises and HIS miracles. Even though it was completely impossible for him and his wife to have a baby - being sexually dead and unable to reproduce - God's promises enabled him to believe it!

When my children were young they liked to stand on the stairs and jump into my arms when I come home. But often times they would hesitate. And so I have to sit at the bottom of the stairs to convince them to jump. I'll say, "Its ok, I'll catch you." If they still didn't jump, I'll hold my arms out farther and say, "it's ok!" Then, finally, after many promises and assurances, I would convince them to jump.

It IS a leap of faith, but they wouldn't do it without me holding out my arms. I would even venture to bet that they wouldn't do that for too many people, except the ones they ***TRUST and they KNOW***. That's what God did for Abraham. The continual promises of God gave His faith a reason to believe that, "since God is almighty, then he can accomplish the impossible. God has rescued me from my mess in Egypt. He has brought me to this land of plenty, just as He promised. Therefore, He will grant me a son. He will send me a Savior." That's what faith is. It is a result of hearing God's promises and God's goodness and being led to believe in them in spite of the odds. The faith is not based on you and I but upon the Character of our God, we are able to believe because God says it! ***You remember God who holds your world in the palm of His almighty Hand... and we call Him Abba!***

Like Abraham, we often let our reason get in the way of our faith. We walk with fears and sorrow that God doesn't want us to have. But God doesn't want us to despair

because of our lack of faith. Instead, he wants to do the same thing with us as he did with Abraham. It's in times of doubt and questioning that we need to go back to the words and promises of God and let them speak to our hearts.

It is comforting to hear **HOW** we receive acceptance from God. Long before Abraham tried to offer Isaac on the altar or performed one good work, God credited Him with righteousness when he believed in his promises. And so Paul writes, the words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God would credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. Being looked at as holy and righteous does not have to do with the amount of my faith, but the object of my faith - the Lord Jesus Christ - raised from the dead.

Faith, then, takes God's promises at face value. Even though my conscience tells me that I am a sinner, and my body shows the result of filth and condemnation, the promise of the Gospel is that God regards me as holy and credits me with the holiness of Christ - through faith in Jesus. If Abraham was credited with righteousness through faith in God's promise of a Savior, and Paul promises me the same, then I also am credited with righteousness through faith in the same Savior. Either Jesus died for all of my sins and God accepted that sacrifice and I am saved through faith, or God is a liar. God can't be a liar. So I must be holy. It's these promises that call to us from heaven saying, "trust in Christ! Believe in his blood and righteousness! Turn to him in faith! He paid for all your sins! He made you holy! Believe it!"

Conclusion: Several years ago, Janet Reno insinuated the following view toward Christians when she said that we were "weak minded" people. For us to hope for an eternal life to live with God and to believe in a God who died and rose from the dead seems hopeless and foolish to an unbeliever - that only gullible people would believe such a thing. It's not logical to reform and live your life around a man whom we've never even seen. When we proclaim that salvation is completely based on Christ and not based on anything WE do - it's not logical! They would say we're foolish for believing such things! It doesn't even seem logical to us - why would a holy God want to love us and live with us in heaven?

But that's what God's Word promises us through the blood of Christ, and so we believe it. Our faith may be illogical to the world, but it is logical to God's Word. It makes perfect sense according to God's Word. Abraham was probably called a fool for changing his name and hoping for a child, and Noah was probably called a fool for building a big ark on dry land. But who was the fool in the end? Therefore, instead of hiding it, we'll proclaim it all the more - that we are saved through faith in Christ. In the end, we'll see just how illogically logical our faith is.