
Discovering God's Plan, Part IV (Hope Against Hope)

God's Plan

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Sermon: God's Plan: Discovering God's Plan, Part IV (Hope Against Hope)

Lesson Text

Jeremiah 29:11 (AV) ¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

Romans 4:17–21 (AV) ¹⁷ (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. ¹⁸ Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. ¹⁹ And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: ²⁰ He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; ²¹ And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

Introduction

The Process of Discovering God's Plans is to Realize God's Plan, Eliminate What's Not God's Plan, and Learn How to Get Unstuck to Get to Your End (Future):

- My End is not in my Heart, it will deceive me and so I must create a new Heart
- My End is not in my Past, so I must keep pressing forward towards my Future
- My End can only be found in my Lord, and so I must wait on the Lord.

Jeremiah 29:11 (BSB – Berean Study Bible) ¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a ***future and a hope***.

Last week we discovered our future, this week we will discover our hope!

To understand how hope works in the discovery of God's Plan for our lives, we must learn its connection to our faith and our works:

- Hebrews 11:1 (AV) ¹ Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
- James 2:26 (AV) ²⁶ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

The first connection we see is that the substance of our faith is hope. The second connection we see is that our faith is useless without our works.

Hope is what gives us the passion to work, and work is what gives our faith life. So, when the enemy wants to destroy your faith (the belief in God's Plan for your life), he attacks your hope. The loss of hope leads to the stoppage of work. And without work, faith is dead.

A person gets married believing that they will live happily ever after (***faith***). So, they start ***working*** to build a life together. But when it doesn't work out like they expected, they lose ***hope*** until eventually they stop working altogether.

Now what Abraham teaches us in our lesson text is what to do when life attacks your hope. He had been given a promise as a young man that he would be the father of many nations. But now he's 100 years old and both he and his wife's bodies are dead.

The Lesson Was He Hoped Against Hope:

- Romans 4:18 (AV) ¹⁸ Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.
- Romans 4:18 (NLT) ¹⁸ Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!”

God has a plan for us, it is a plan to prosper us and give us a future and hope, even when life gives us no future to see and no reason to hope!

Series and Sermon: God's Plan: Discovering God's Plan, Part IV (Hope Against Hope)

“Work Against Hope, Believe Against Hope, Hope Against Hope”

I. Work Against Hope

Romans 4:20 (AV) ²⁰ He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

The first key to hope is to keep working even when you have no hope.

As we stated earlier, most people work because they have hope. They get a degree, get a corporate job, marry the man or woman of their dreams, start a business, begin a ministry all with a hope of better days are coming.

But many times, when we look at those same people years later, we notice that something has changed. They may still be on the job, working the business, still in church, still in the marriage but they have no joy and excitement because they've lost their hope.

They stop trying because it's not getting any better. They stop working.

James 2:20–22 (AV) ²⁰ But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? ²² Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

Faith is not perfected when things come to past, it is perfected when you keep working even when they don't.

Our lesson text says that Abraham ***“Staggered Not”***; that is, he never wavered from his work because it wasn't based on what he saw, it was based on what God had promised him.

2 Corinthians 1:20 (AV) ²⁰ For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

We keep working not because we hope it will get better, we work because we know it will get better because we got a promise.

II. Believe Against Hope

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

The next key to hope is to keep believing even when you see no hope.

In the previous point, we learned that people stop working because they **have no hope**. But eventually they will stop believing and give up because they **see no hope**!

People who have lost their hope, can still remain in their marriage, on the job, in the ministry; they just stop working because they don't think things will get any better.

But this is not Satan's endgame. His ultimate goal is to get us to the place where we lose our faith altogether and just leave, quit, or give up!

This happens when we get to a place where we just can't see doing it anymore, we can't see holding on to it anymore, we can't see fighting for it anymore. We just can't see it!

The answer is you have to **stop looking**. Stop associating your hope and faith with your sight.

Hebrews 11:1 (AV) ¹ Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 Corinthians 5:7 (AV) ⁷ (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

Matthew 18:9 (GNB) ⁹ **And if your eye makes you lose your faith, take it out and throw it away! It is better for you to enter life with only one eye than to keep both eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.**

III. Hope Against Hope

Romans 4:18 (AV) ¹⁸ Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

When you have no hope, Work Against Hope by holding on to God's Promises

When you see no hope, Believe Against Hope by refusing to see (stop looking)

Finally, when you have no reason to hope, Hope Against Hope and fulfill the Promise

Jeremiah 29:11 (BSB) ¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a **future and a hope**.

- Romans 4:18 (NLT) ¹⁸ Even when there was **no reason for hope**, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!”

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- Romans 4:18 (The Message) ¹⁸When ***everything was hopeless***, Abraham believed anyway, deciding to live not on the basis of what he saw he *couldn't* do but on what God said he *would* do. And so he was made father of a multitude of peoples. God himself said to him, "You're going to have a big family, Abraham!"

The reason why we can hope against hope to fulfill the promise is because we are not the one who's going to fulfill it, God is!

- Romans 4:21 (AV) ²¹ And being fully persuaded that, what he (God) had promised, he (God) was able also to perform.
- Philippians 1:6 (AV) ⁶ Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:
- Ephesians 3:20 (AV) ²⁰ Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

Keep on Working Against Hope, Keep on Believing Against Hope, Keep on Hoping Against Hope

Midweek Study Lesson Plan (Sermon: Discovering God's Plan, Part IV (Hope Against Hope))

Lesson Text

- Romans 4:17–21

Sermon Outline (Notes)

I. *Work Against Hope*

II. *Believe Against Hope*

III. *Hope Against Hope*

Questions (What was your main takeaway from Sunday's Sermon?)

I. Getting to Know "Me"

1. Aside from the Bible, what other books have you read and which one had the most impact on you?
2. How many pairs of shoes do you own? When you're done with them, do you donate them, give them away, trash them, or keep them until they come back in style?

II. Into the Bible

1. Among the instructions given to us in Romans 12 is that we be "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;" (Romans 12:12). What does it mean to rejoice in hope? Can you give an example of what that looks like in real life? What would be the opposite of rejoicing in hope?
2. Read James 1:5-8 and Mark 9:23-24. The father seeking healing for his son said to Jesus: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." Was he double minded? Explain why or why not.

III. Life Application

1. Paul expresses in Rom 4:20-21 how Abraham went through his "middle" while waiting on God's promise to be fulfilled in his life.
 - What can we learn from Abraham to prevent us from "staggering" while waiting on our promise?
 - Is it possible for a believer to be in unbelief? If so, how?
 - What method(s) can we use to develop a strong faith even while in this pandemic?
 - Do you have a personal hope-against-hope testimony or one that you know of that you can share with your growth group? If so, please share. This may encourage others.