

Romans 4: 13-17 NIV

“God doesn’t play favorites”

“It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

“(14) For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, (15) because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

“(16) Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

“(17) As it is written: ‘I have made you a father of many nations.’ He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.”

Paul assumed his readers knew Bible history when he wrote the *Book of Romans*.

- **Most Christians then were familiar with the *OT* and Jesus’ teachings.**
- **Many believers now know and hear only certain parts of the Bible.**

Paul referred to Abraham in our text.

- I wonder how many facts about Abraham, most of today’s Christians could relate.
- **Could they tell you when he lived, where he was born, and the name of Abraham’s wife?**

You likely know that Sarah, Abraham’s wife, attracted the attention of other guys.

Sarah turned some important heads.

At first sight, King Pharaoh of Egypt fell in love with Sarah; so did another king named Abimelech.

In Abraham’s day, of course, kings could choose any lady they liked.

Sometimes they sent scouts to find the most attractive females in the kingdom.

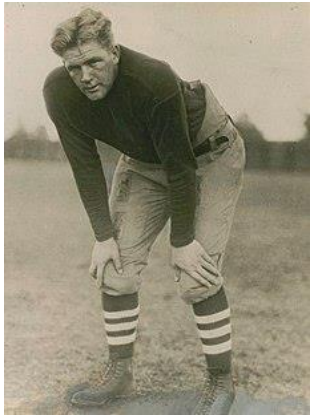
We can only surmise whether Sarah’s beauty would have qualified her to have her picture on “Vogue” or “Woman’s Day.”

If Sarah caught the attention of kings, she probably showed class



We can’t neglect this important detail about Sarah and Abraham.

They’d been married a long time and always wanted a son.



Ernie Nevers

No son arrived for their cradle.

The Lord kept promising Abraham he’d be a daddy.

He and Sarah aged long past childbearing years—even grew older than Norma and I.

Abe and Sarah thought their next big events would be their funerals, not childbirth.

One starry night, the Lord asked Abe to step outside.
“Abe, do you see all those stars?” the Lord said.

“I sure do,” Abe answered.

He considered himself too old to be a father, but he still had good vision.

“Abe, can you count all those stars?”

“No Lord, there are too many.”

“Someday, Abe, you’ll have more descendants than you can count.”

Even though he and Sarah had grown old, Abraham believed God.

God rewarded Abe in several ways.

Just as we, Abe had many foibles.

Yet the Lord said, “I’m going to credit your belief as righteousness to you.”

God also changed his name from Abram, (exalted father) to Abraham (father of the nations).

- **Being a father seemed as impossible to Abraham as becoming a college football player would be to me at this stage in my life.**

It was virtually impossible even when I was young; now it’s totally remote.

But Lord says, “Bob you’ll be starting running back for the Iowa Hawkeyes next Saturday. Coach Ferentz stands outside waiting to interview you.”

I go to the door and see Coach Ferentz with his backfield coach holding play books ready to go.

Team practice starts tomorrow at 3 PM.

Do you believe that could happen to me?

That’s how impossible it seemed to Abram and Sarah that they should have a son.

That’s why verse 17 of our text reads:

“God gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.”

1. **Just as he promised, God later gave Abraham and Sarah a son.**

He also blessed Abraham with seven lesser-known sons, and millions of descendants.

They've become countless as the visible stars.

2. Abraham's belief in God symbolized all who believe and trust in Jesus.

- When we believe and obey Christ, we become children of Abraham—ASA children of God.
- "As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were."**¹

Fully respond to Christ and God gives you what you need to do his will.

He does something even greater for you.

He raised Jesus from the dead.

**Believe and fully trust in Christ,
God will raise you, too,**

Think of our similarities with Abraham.

We're locked into time and space.

BORN ➡ Move through life ➡ DIE

**While alive, we can't see one minute,
not even a millisecond into the future.**

We dream, plan, and hope.

We want an education and to make a good living.

Many guys hope to marry a girl who resembles a swimsuit model.

Many girls hope for a handsome billionaire.

Most want a spouse who'll be 100% faithful.

And a family that appreciates them.

You know the down-side of not seeing the future.

Unexpected bad things occur.

- **Diseases and accidents; disappointing elections.**
- **Ambitions of others; conflicts with others.**

You win a starting position on the BB team, but then the coach finds a phenomenal super-star freshman who beats you out of your position.

The man of your dreams comes along.

**You think he's in love with you,
but then he falls for a floozy.**



BORN ➡ Move through life's uncertainty, disappointments, and challenges. ➡ END

Remember this about life's progress, and its end.

In the entire process, God is here.

As Psalm 121 reads, "he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep . . . the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."

Not like security guards who sometimes fall asleep.

¹ See also Galatians 3:26-29

“My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

He controls time and space—all parts of the universe—every nook and cranny.

God began life.

He knows life from beginning to end. As Jesus Christ, He visited earth for a while taking the form of flesh that we all share.

That’s why Jesus could say,

“I am the way, the truth and the life.”

Many take the attitude that

“I’m doing fine; I don’t need God right now.”

I absolutely can guarantee you the following:

- If you’re proud of your youth, you’ll be old someday.**
- If you’re proud of your education, you’ll discover that it didn’t make you any happier than people who had half as much.**
- If you’re proud of your strength, someday you’ll be weak.**
- If you link your happiness to any human being that person will eventually let you down.**

Give your life to Jesus, trusting in God, who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they are.

You’ll always find hope, joy, and security



Tyler Zeller

Zion Williamson

Think of a basketball in the hands of a skilled player as an example of God’s control.

Would you rather depend on the power of the one who holds the ball

or the unseen mites crawling on the ball?

God created the earth and all the other greater and lesser spheres in the universe.

He started time.

He controls the power of life and death and he can call things that are not as though they are.

Trust him.

Give your life to him.

Only he can give lasting hope, joy, and security.

I read about a little boy, who, as many of us did, daily walked to and from school.

Darkening clouds one morning made his trek to the elementary school questionable.

As the afternoon progressed, winds whipped up, along with thunder and lightning.

The little boy's mother felt concerned that her son would be frightened as he walked home.

She also feared harm to her son from the electrical storm.

Flaming swords of lightning and roars of thunder began to rattle the sky.

The greatly concerned mother quickly got into her car and drove along her child's route.

As she drove, she saw her little boy walking.

She noted that at each lightning flash, he stopped, looked up, and smiled.

One strike quickly followed another; with each the little boy looked up at the streak of light and smiled.

When she drove beside the child she lowered the window and called to him,

**"What are you doing?
Why do you keep stopping?"**



Her little boy answered, "I am trying to look nice and smile. God keeps taking my picture."²



As Jesus taught: **"Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?"** God knows what we need, **(Matthew 6).**

That little boy's understanding of God far exceeds that of many long-term Christians, who daily fret, stew, and grumble.

God has no color, language, or nationalistic favorites.

As the Apostle Peter finally learned:

"I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism³ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right."³

God has never failed me or you.

Let's praise him together through Christ who destroyed death for all who believe Him, trust

Him, and love as he loved and forgave us.

**Bob Blair
PO Box 176
Cleghorn, IA 51014**

www.robertblairbooks.com

² I don't recall where I found this story.

³ Acts 10:34,35 NIV