

# Romans 4:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

## Analysis

**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.**

Paul describes Abraham's faith with paradoxical language: *par' elpida ep' elpidi episteusen* (παρ' ἐλπίδα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι ἐπίστευσεν), "against hope upon hope he believed"). There was no human basis (*para*, παρά, "contrary to") for hope—Abraham was approximately 100, Sarah 90, both reproductively dead. Yet upon hope (*ep' elpidi*, ἐπ' ἐλπίδι) he believed, founded on God's promise rather than circumstances.

The purpose (*eis to genesthai*, εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι, "in order that he might become") returns to Abraham's calling: father of many nations. The phrase *kata to eirēmenon* (κατὰ τὸ εἰρημένον, "according to what was spoken") references Genesis 15:5, where God showed Abraham the stars and said, "So shall your seed be." Abraham's faith was word-centered—he believed God's spoken promise against all contrary evidence. This illustrates *pistis* (πίστις, "faith") as trust in God's word over visible reality, a trust that justifies because it honors God as truthful and powerful.

## Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern culture valued fertility and offspring as divine blessing and the pathway to a lasting legacy. For Abraham and Sarah to remain childless into

extreme old age would have seemed like divine curse or abandonment. Abraham's faith that God would fulfill His promise despite biological impossibility demonstrated radical trust in God's character and power—precisely what Paul argues justifies.

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. What does it mean to believe 'against hope upon hope,' and when do circumstances tempt you to stop believing God's promises?
2. How is Abraham's faith in God's word over visible evidence a model for justifying faith today?
3. Why does Paul keep emphasizing Abraham's calling to be 'father of many nations' throughout this chapter?

## Interlinear Text

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ὅς παρ' ἐλπίδι ἐπ' ἐλπίδι ἐπίστευσεν εἰς τὸ<sup>6</sup>  
Who against hope in hope believed that G3588  
G3739 G3844 G1680 G1909 G1680 G4100 G1519

γενέσθαι αὐτὸν πατέρα πολλῶν ἐθνῶν κατὰ τὸ<sup>7</sup>  
might become he the father of many nations according G3588  
G1096 G846 G3962 G4183 G1484 G2596

εἰρημένον· Οὕτως ἔσται τὸ σπέρμα σου  
to that which was spoken So be G3588 seed G4690 thy  
G2046 G3779 G2071 G4675

## Additional Cross-References

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**Romans 8:24** (Hope): For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

**Acts 27:25** (Faith): Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

**Romans 5:5** (Hope): And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

**Proverbs 13:12** (Hope): Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

**Ezekiel 37:11** (Hope): Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.

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