



Light from the Word

The Faith of Abraham

Theme verse: *“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.¹”*

God's Word entreats us to walk *“in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham.²”* What was the nature of Abraham's faith? Did he struggle against doubts and fears? How can we be justified by faith and be *“blessed with faithful Abraham?³”* What was the blessing of Abraham? How did his obedience affect this blessing? Let's take a closer look at Abraham's faith and faithfulness.

Abraham's father left his homeland to go to Canaan, but stopped and settled his family – including Abraham and his wife Sarah -- in the town of Haran. Many years later, the Lord *“said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and... I will bless thee.⁴”* This call to be blessed by God came at a steep cost. Abraham had to deny himself the comforts of his life and family in Haran, and trust that God would bless him in an unknown life in an unknown land. We likewise are called by Jesus to deny

ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow Him.⁵

Imagine if Abraham had told God he believed, but like his father stopped and stayed at some other place. Without the fruits of trust and obedience, his faith would have been dead⁶ and the blessing forfeited. Thankfully, *“By faith Abraham... obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.⁷”* We in like manner demonstrate our faith in Christ by the choices we make in obeying his Word and trusting his provision, believing His promise that *“whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.⁸”*

Abraham lived many years in Canaan as a pilgrim and stranger, waiting to inherit the promises⁹. Perhaps he was tempted to build a permanent dwelling place, or intermingle with godless people, or give up and go back to the comforts of his homeland. But by faith he looked *“for a city... whose builder and maker is God.”* And because of this, God was not ashamed to be called his God, and prepared for him an eternal inheritance.¹⁰ We like Abraham are called to live as pilgrims and strangers, setting our affections on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God and prepares us a home in glory.

In the midst of his years of waiting, God spoke comforting

words to Abraham: *“Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”* Why would God speak this to Abraham? And why did Abraham ask, *“Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?¹¹”* Abraham must have felt fearful, confused, perhaps even discouraged and struggling with unbelief. We too may find ourselves “troubled on every side” with fightings without and fears within.¹² And yet God speaks to us through the comfort of His Holy Spirit in our hearts, reassuring us of His love and faithfulness.

Following Abraham's question, a profound event took place. God assured him that he would indeed bear a son, and then said, *“Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.”* In that moment, in the midst of fears and uncertainties, Abraham *“believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.¹³”* What a miraculous transformation, to believe and become righteous in God's eyes! Abraham did not earn his righteousness. He believed in the Lord, and God in his grace credited Abraham's belief to him as righteousness. This amazing truth *“was not written for his sake alone, ... but for us also, to whom*

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it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.¹⁴”

And yet immediately after Abraham believed, he seemed to still struggle to grasp it all, and asked God how he would know it to be true. God in his mercy explained his plan and sealed a covenant with Abraham by blood and sacrifice.¹⁵ We also may struggle to believe God’s promises. May our faith rest in God’s New Testament covenant of grace, sealed in the precious blood of Jesus.

Years later, when Abraham was ninety-nine years old, God again appeared and confirmed his wife Sarah would bear a child. In response to this impossible thought, “Abraham laughed,” seemingly struggling to believe, perhaps thinking the promise would be fulfilled through his son Ishmael.¹⁶ But God patiently repeated his miraculous declaration, and Abraham “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.¹⁷”

What was this promise that Abraham believed? Was it simply

that his seed would inherit the land of Canaan? Or did he look beyond, to a Redeemer who would spring forth from his seed? Jesus himself confirms that “Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.¹⁸” And so against hope, Abraham believed in hope and believed in the coming of a Savior, through whom he and millions after him would be justified by faith.¹⁹ We likewise are called to believe in hope, trusting that despite the weakness of our flesh, God is able by his grace to make us righteous through faith and help us walk faithfully until the promised rest.

After the promised child grew to be a young lad, God asked Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son. What if Abraham refused God’s command to offer his son back to God? Would he still be the father of those who are justified by faith? And yet his faith was fully alive, for “*by faith Abraham, when he was tried... offered up his only begotten son... accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.*²⁰” In response God declared: “*In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.*²¹” And so Abraham’s faith brought forth the fruit of faithfulness, and “*by works was faith made perfect.*²²”

This same precept applies to us: “*But if, while we seek to be justified*

*by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.*²³” And yet we can take courage, for “*now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*²⁴” “*For if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*²⁵”

Endnotes:

¹ Hebrews 11:7

² Romans 4:12

³ Galatians 3:9

⁴ Genesis 12:1-2

⁵ Luke 9:23

⁶ James 2:26

⁷ Hebrews 11:7

⁸ Luke 9:24

⁹ Hebrews 11:13

¹⁰ Hebrews 11:9-10, 15-16

¹¹ Genesis 15:1-2

¹² 2 Corinthians 7:5

¹³ Genesis 15:4-6

¹⁴ Romans 4:23-25

¹⁵ Genesis 15:8-21

¹⁶ Genesis 17:15-18

¹⁷ Romans 4:20-21

¹⁸ John 8:56

¹⁹ Romans 4:18

²⁰ Hebrews 11:17-19

²¹ Genesis 22:18

²² James 2:22

²³ Galatians 2:17

²⁴ Romans 6:22

²⁵ Galatians 3:29