

Abraham

Abraham is another of the heroes mentioned in God's "Hall of Faith." He is the patriarch of the Nation of Israel and is known as the "Father of faith" to all who believe.

⁸By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

⁹By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;

¹⁰for he was looking for the city which has foundations whose architect and builder is God...

¹³All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

(Heb. 11:8-10, 13)

Abraham is the composite of God'

We saw that Able worshipped in faith, Enoch walked by faith, and Noah worked by faith; in Abraham we see a man who lived by faith. What does it mean to live by faith? Most people live by sight. This is the empirical way – we base everything on what we can see. Living by faith is to base your life completely on what you cannot see. As Christians we walk by faith. Most of what we read in the Bible, we have never seen. The people, places, languages, the manuscripts, God, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit – we have never seen. "Yet we live in the conviction of all these things by faith. We bank our earthly lives and our eternal destiny on things which we have never seen. That is the way the people of God have always lived."¹ Abraham who lived by faith was the prototype of all who would follow him and live by faith. More than the example, he is the model.

Our text reveals several aspects of Abraham's life for us to follow:

The Pilgrimage of faith

The Patience of faith

The Power of faith,

The Positiveness of faith

The Proof of faith

¹ John MacArthur, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Hebrews, (Chicago: Moody Press

I. The Pilgrimage of faith

The first element of faith exemplified by Abraham was the “Pilgrimage of Faith.”

⁸By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance;

The writer to the Hebrews refers to Abrahams original calling by God to leave his country, (Ur of the Chaldeans), and go to a place that He would show him (the land of Canaan). There he lived in tents in the land of promise without possessing it, though it was his inheritance. In doing so he demonstrated a life of faith.

The Genesis account of God’s call to Abraham, also known as the Abrahamic Covenant is recorded as follows:

Genesis 12

¹Now the Lord said to Abram,

“Go forth from your country,
and from your relatives
and from your father’s house,
to the land which I will show you;

²and I will make you a great nation,
and I will bless you,

³and I will make your name great;
and so you shall be a blessing;
and I will bless those who bless you,
and the one who curses you I will curse.

And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

(Gen. 12:1-3)

Abram lived in a pagan culture, in his native city called Ur of Chaldea, in a general region called Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Isaiah referred to Abraham as

“The rock from which you were hewn”

and “the quarry from which you were dug” (Is. 51:1-2).

In other words, the society from which Abram came was completely pagan and filled with idolatry. He was no better than his neighbors; no more righteous nor moral.

“God chose him because he wanted to choose him. And when God spoke to hi, he listened; when God promised, he trusted; when God commanded, he obeyed.”²

God called him to bless him and the world through him.

⁴So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him;
(Gen. 12:4)

God follows this same pattern in our lives.

Those who come to Christ must leave their pagan roots
and enter the promised land and start a new life.

Paul wrote,

“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor. 5:17).

Salvation means separation from the world, and like Abraham we must leave everything that is not pleasing to God.

MacArthur writes,

“Giving up the old life is one of the greatest obstacles to coming to Christ, and is also one of the greatest obstacles to faithful living once we are in Christ. From the perspective of the old life and the old nature the new life in Christ can appear dull and unexciting. When we think this way we fail to understand that, once we become a Christian, we are given a new set of values, interests, and desires – which we cannot experience in advance. We cannot “see” the blessings and satisfaction of the life in Christ before we trust Him as Lord and Savior. We believe and then we experience.”

What holds us back from becoming pilgrims on the earth? Worldliness.

It’s more of a desire to do what is evil than actually doing it.

The pilgrimage of faith begins by separating ourselves from the world.

⁸and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

² MacArthur, p. 328.

II. The Patience of faith

⁹By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;
¹⁰for he was looking for the city which has foundations whose architect and builder is God... (Gen. 12:9-10).

The second aspect of faith modeled by Abraham is patience. Abram left everything to follow God's leading and lived the rest of his life in tents, along with Isaac and Jacob, who also lived their lives in tents, never to possess the land, except by faith.

It was promised but never possessed. He had a patient belief that God is faithful.

Patience...

“Not giving God a deadline to remove a difficult situation”

Waiting

Patience is a key ingredient to faith

William Carey spent thirty-five years in India and saw only a handful of converts. Yet every missionary that went to India since that time owes a debt to Carey. He planted so they could harvest. He translated the Word of God into Indian dialects. He saw his fruit by faith because he had faith's patience and did not grow weary in well-doing.”

James writes,

“Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient” (James 5:7-8)

All God's heroes in the Hall of Faith learned to wait.

Faith always has a time of waiting. For Abraham Isaac and Jacob they spent their entire lives in tents, never to possess what was promised.

⁹By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob,

As believers the most difficult times are the in-between times. Abraham waited nearly 20 years for a son. If we knew that Christ would be returning

within a month we would give ourselves to prayer, witnessing, serving and everything we could to carry on the Lord's business. The hard part of waiting is when it keeps on delaying for months and even years.

New England preacher Phillips Brooks was known for his calmness and poise. His intimate friends, however, knew that he, too, suffered moments of frustration and irritability. One day a friend saw him pacing the floor like a caged lion.

"What is the trouble, Dr. Brooks?" asked the friend.

"The trouble is," replied Brooks, "That I'm in a hurry, but God isn't."

Have you ever felt that way?

Abraham's secret: he kept his hope in the ultimate fulfillment in the promise of God. Even if he had inherited the land in his lifetime, it would not have been his ultimate inheritance.

He looked to the heavenly land –

¹⁰for he was looking for the city which has foundations
whose architect and builder is God...

We can be of no earthly good unless we are heavenly minded. Only the heavenly minded will have the patience to continue faithful in God's work when it becomes hard, unappreciated, and seemingly unending.

We've seen faith as a pilgrimage, requiring great patience

...Faith is also great power.

III. The Power of faith,

No matter what happens we can pray and believe the promises of God.

¹¹By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.

¹²Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. (Heb. 11:11-12).

The writer to the Hebrews shows us that Isaac's birth was miraculous and happened because of the power of faith. From a human standpoint Sarah's ability to conceive was impossible. First, she had been barren all her life. Second, she was ninety years old at that time –

...beyond the proper time of life for childbearing.

Yet, at that age she conceived and gave birth to the promised son.

It is likely that it was Abraham's faith that provided Sarah with the ability to conceive, and Abraham the ability to make it happen.

"Therefore there was born even of one man, and Him as good as dead at that, ...descendants"

Both experienced the miracle of a child in old age.

Through Abraham's faith God miraculously fulfilled His promise. The Jewish nation came from Abraham's faith.

Jesus said, "All things are possible to him who believes" (Matt. 19:26)

Paul said, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." (Phil. 4:13)

And "unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us" (Eph. 3:20).

The hindrance is always on our part and not on God's

We have an unlimited God, but little faith.

Pastor said to me, "I don't have much faith, but I have a great big God."

Paul writes,

In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."

Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God and being fully assured that what God had promised He was able also to perform. (Rom. 4:18-21).

Abraham's faith didn't just make him the Father of Israel, but of all who have his faith.

For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, "A father of many nations have I made you")

(Rom. 4:16-17)