

Abraham – The Life of Faith

Abraham lived by faith as the prototype of all who would live by faith. Last time we looked at the pilgrimage of faith.

I. The Pilgrimage of faith

Heb. 11:8-19

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

The first aspect of Abraham's faith was leaving his country and going to where God would lead him. So God led Abram from Ur of the Chaldees to the land of Canaan, which was to become his inheritance. The first step of faith is to follow Christ and forsake the world.

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.”

II. The Patience of faith

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...

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.

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.”**

Learning to wait on the Lord involves developing a long-term trust that God is and will always be faithful. Abraham and his son, Isaac, and his son, Jacob lived in tents all their lives, though they live in the promised land without possessing it.

As this text says,

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

Like us, they were looking for heaven, for the city of God.
They also waited patiently for a child.

III. The Power of faith,

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).

(Heb. 11:8-10, 13)

Because God promised, they believed, and received a child, miraculously. A year before angels visited Abram’s camp. In the conversation they said that Sarah would have her baby within the next year, and Sarah laughed out loud at the thought. When the baby was born they named him Isaac, which means laughter. Their faith gave them the power to have a baby in old age.

Our faith in Christ gives us the power to live for Him,
since it is Christ in us and living through us that is our life.

IV. The Positiveness of faith

All 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. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. (Heb. 11:13-16)

How could they go through their entire lives without receiving the promise?

Their faith was positive because it looked to eternity.

They desired heaven more than this world!

The author concluded:

Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God;
for He has prepared a city for them

Faith is positive and is not disappointed.

V. The Proof of faith

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type. (Heb. 11:17-19).

The writer to the Hebrews wrote that it was by faith that Abraham offered up Isaac, his promised son. In the Genesis account God spoke to Abraham.

Gen. 22:1-18 contains the entire story.

¹Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ²He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." ...

The story begins with the words, "God tested Abraham."

It was a test of Abraham's faith.

God had great plans for Abraham and needed Abraham to have great faith.

Adrian Rogers said,

A faith that hasn't been tested can't be trusted.

1. Instant Obedience

“Here am I” – Abraham was ready to listen when God spoke

As we compare the two accounts [Hebrews and Genesis] we read only of Abraham’s obedience in the Genesis account. This is the first use of the word ‘obey’ in Scripture. No motives or inner struggle are mentioned, only instant obedience. The basic elements of today’s stories involves motives/inner struggle. Here the focus is simply on Abraham’s obedience.

³So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

⁴On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.”

2. Long Obedience

It was a three-day journey from Beersheba, where Abraham was living, to Moriah, where the sacrifice was to take place. Over that time Abraham persisted to his destination without deviation or delay.

Eugen Peterson wrote,

“We assume that if something can be done at all, it can be done quickly and efficiently. Our attention spans have been conditioned by thirty-second commercials. Our sense of reality has been flattened by thirty-page abridgements. It is not difficult in such a world to get a person interested in the message of the gospel; it is terrifically difficult to sustain the interestThere is a great market for religious experience in our world; there is little enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of virtue, little inclination to sign up for a long apprenticeship in what earlier generation of Christians called holiness.”¹

We must remember that Christian discipleship is a lifelong journey. It’s not a sprint; it’s a marathon.

“Woe to him who has a full-time ministry, and only a part-time message” John W.

¹ Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1980), Pp., 11-12.

3. Willing Obedience

Abraham obeyed God even though it contradicted God's promises.

How do we obey when we disagree? How could Abraham?

The Answer: He expected a miracle! "...we will worship and return to you"

As they walked, up the mountain, Abraham and his son had a conversation.

⁶Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. ⁷Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

⁸God will provide for himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

Abraham obeyed that God that God would provide up to the point of sacrifice:

⁹Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" and he said, "Here I am."

¹²He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

¹³Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.

"The ultimate proof of Abraham's faith was in his willingness to give back to God everything he had, including the son of promise, whom he had miraculously received by his faith."²

Abraham called the name of that place **The Lord Will Provide**, as it is to this day. "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided."

(Gen. 22:14)

If we desire to be a friend of God, then we must have the faith of Abraham.

² MacArthur, p. 335.

He is the prototype of our faith.

Our faith journey moves from Faith to Friendship.

Oswald Chambers said,

“Faith is the deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time.”

The basis of all friendship is trust. Abraham had a confident, settled trust that God would keep his promise to make a great nation of him – through Isaac.

The Reward of Faith is God’s Friendship!

The writer to the Hebrews refers to Abraham’s faith,

“He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type.” (Heb. 11:19)

This scene became a picture of what was to come.

In the future God would provide His only begotten Son as a sacrifice for our sins. Afterwards, He would rise from the dead. All who put their trust in Him would be forgiven of their sins; and by having the faith of Abraham, become a friend of God. Will you put your faith in God and invite Christ to be your Savior?