

Sunday, April 18, 2021 pm

BY FAITH ABRAHAM

Hebrews 11:8

When we think of the subject of faith, the name Abraham comes to mind at the forefront. He is described as the Father of Faith and a great example of what true faith is. More than 70 times, he is mentioned in the New Testament by name (second only to Moses who is mentioned about 80 times), not to mention the verses and contexts accompanying his name. And much of that has to do with his faith. Hebrews 11, the “chapter of faith” references him in vs. 8-19, mentioned as much as Moses.

We often mention Abraham when we deal with the subject of faith. But in this lesson I would like to actually examine his faith and see why we refer to him when we think about this subject.

I. What is faith?

- a. Hebrews 11:1 gives a good description of faith and some describe it as a definition. *Now faith is the substance (assurance – NASB) of things hoped for, the evidence (conviction – NASB) of things not seen.* Faith is WHY we believe! While we have not seen God or Jesus, we know they are there because of our faith. And as I have noted on numerous occasions – it is NOT a blind faith, but one based upon convincing evidence.
- b. When I describe the term “faith” I think of two things – trusting God and believing God (as opposed to merely believing IN God).
- c. We are also told that without faith we cannot please God – Hebrews 11:6.
Faith is crucial to our salvation – Ephesians 2:8-9, a term in a text that encompasses our part (all that we do) to secure our salvation.

II. Abraham is a great example of faith in the New Testament

- a. Romans 4:1-4 appeals to Abraham’s belief which God “accounted to him for righteousness”.
- b. Galatians 3:5-9ff similarly explains how faith (belief) is crucial to our salvation, looking to the example of Abraham as being declared righteous by God.
- c. Hebrews 11:8 & 17 – “by faith Abraham” obeyed – the writer proceeds to describe 4 events in his life that demonstrated his faith – 1) Leaving UR, 2) Dwelling in the land of promise as a foreigner, 3) Sarah his wife conceiving when they were both past age (she was 90 and he was 100); 4) His willingness to offer his son Isaac when God told him (but he was stopped by God), concluding that even if he went through with the sacrifice, God could raise him from the dead.
- d. James 2:21-23 – how Abraham was justified by works when he offered Isaac.
- e. These examples tell us that if we want to understand faith, we ought to look at the example of Abraham. So let us do that for a few moments.

III. What made Abraham a man of faith?

- a. He listened to God – as you study the life of Abraham, you find a series of revelations from God. The LORD appeared to Abraham and communicated with him.
 - i. Genesis 12:1-3 – we find the LORD had told Abram to go to a place he said to God.
Vs. 4 – Abram went as the LORD had spoken to him.
Vs. 7 we again find the LORD appearing to Abram and promising to give him that land.
 - ii. Genesis 13:14-17 – after Lot chooses the plains of the Jordan.
 - iii. And numerous other times that are significant – Genesis 15 record the Lord’s covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17 records the sign of circumcision, Genesis 18 records the LORD warning him about Sodom and Abraham intercedes with the LORD,
And ultimately when the LORD tells Abraham to offer Isaac in Genesis 22.
More on these as our lesson develops.

- iv. **OUR faith needs to come from hearing God's word** – Romans 10:17; John 20:30-31 – these are written so that we may believe. This is why we must continue to study His word.
- b. He obeyed God –
 - i. Hebrews 11:8 tells us clearly that he obeyed God by faith. As you examine the various events in his life, you will see how he constantly did whatever the LORD told him to do.
 - ii. James 2:21-23 bears this out as speaks of Abraham being justified by his works – not meritorious, but in a context of true and living faith.
 - iii. **Similarly, OUR faith needs to be an obedient faith** – you find that in EVERY example in Hebrews 11.
Romans 1:5 speaks of our obedience to the faith (also Romans 16:25-26)
Again be reminded of James 2:14-18 – we need to SHOW our faith by our works. The point is we obey God. True faith will do what God tells us to do.
- c. He worshipped God –
 - i. Continually we read of Abraham, when he moved somewhere, the first thing he would do is build an altar to the LORD – Genesis 12:8, 13:4, 13:18, 21:33. Genesis 15 records an occasion when the LORD told Abraham to cut up some animals and Abraham did. This is when God made a covenant with Abraham (15:8-18)
I am convinced with Abraham that one of the aspects that made his faith so strong was how he continually remembered God and put Him first. You find in Abraham one who was very reverent.
 - ii. **Similarly, we need to worship God if our faith is to increase.**
John 4:24 – we worship Him in Spirit and in truth.
It is seen when our acts of worship are from the heart.
Every act of worship is an act of faith – our singing to God, our giving, the Lord's Supper (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:26), as we pray to Him (should it be in faith? James 1:6), and as we study God's word (Romans 10:17)
It is also seen by the fact that we are willing to worship Him – even openly. Hebrews 10:24-25 – this is leading up to the writer's challenge for them to endure.
- d. He trusted
 - i. It is just abundantly clear throughout his life – from his leaving UR and Haran, to his acceptance of God's promises (not yet complete, especially the promise that it would not be completed during his life time – Genesis 15. NOTE again vs 6, "*And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.*" This text is the text of emphasis throughout the NT concerning his faith.
And of course there is the sacrifice of Isaac as instructed in Genesis 22. Genesis 22:8 finds him telling Isaac, "God will provide." And after Abraham was stopped, He did! (vs. 12-13) where AGAIN we find Abraham worshipping God.
Hebrews 11:17-19 describes that trust! He was convinced that God would keep His word, even to the point of raising Isaac from the dead.
That is genuine trust.
 - ii. **Do we trust God like Abraham?**
I have already emphasized that true faith is about trusting God. And it is a deep trust and will act in His interest, even when we do not fully understand the outcome, or know it involves unpleasant actions.
And let us especially remember this, as we obey God and worship Him. We MUST remember that it is not about us! Our actions do not MERIT our salvation. We are simply obeying Him. That is the point of Ephesians 2:8-9 – our salvation is "not of works lest anyone should boast." We have also seen that in Romans 4:1-4 where Paul is emphatic that Abraham was justified by faith and not works.

PLEASE do not think this means that we do nothing. You will NOT be saved if you refuse to obey God! It is just that simple (Matthew 7:21-23). But you must never think you will MERIT your salvation either! That is why our faith involves trust.
Do you trust Him as you should?

e. He grew in faith

- i. During his life Abraham faced a number of tests of his faith
 1. First – he was told to go the land God would show him – Genesis 12:1-3 and he went. He PASSED that test.
 2. Second – he goes with Sarai to Egypt because there was a famine in the land. There he tells Sarai to deceive Pharaoh by saying she was his sister instead of his wife. (Genesis 12:10-20). The LORD delivered Abraham when Pharaoh took her thinking she was not married. He was cursed and she was given back to Abraham and sent away. He FAILED that test.
 3. Third – with strife between his flocks and that of Lot's, he lets Lot choose which direction to God (Genesis 13). Lot chooses the plains of the Jordan, including Sodom, because of its pastures. The LORD again appears to Abraham and promises to give him the land. (Genesis 13:14-18). He PASSED this test and the LORD was pleased.
 4. Fourth – he tries to help God because Sarai is barren. First, he offers his servant Eliezer's descendants (Genesis 15), but the YHWH tells him that his seed would come from his own body. This is where we first read, "And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." (Genesis 15:6). We also find a sacrifice and the LORD appears to him with further instructions – including the waiting of 400 years when his descendants would inherit the land. The LORD also made a covenant with Abraham that day. He trusts God's word, BUT he still acts with weak faith. He goes in to Hagar, Sarah's handmaid and conceives Ishmael (Genesis 16). This is an effort to help God. This is a FAILED test.
 5. Abraham and Abimelech is a repetition of his going to Egypt. (Genesis 20). Again Abraham FAILED this test.
 6. Finally, Isaac is born (Genesis 21) and in chapter 22, we find Abraham's ultimate test where he is told to offer Isaac. Abraham's faith is not so great that he immediately complies by faith. He PASSED this test!
- ii. IN his life, we can see that Abraham's faith at first was not as strong as it could be. But as he matured in the faith, he trusted God more and more to the point that NOTHING could cause his faith to waver.
- iii. FAITH is a growing process. When we first obey the gospel, God does not expect our faith to be mature. BUT as time goes on, he does expect it to increase. 2 Thessalonians 1:3 – they were commended for their faith as it was growing.
May we, as we increase in knowledge and experience, develop a deeper faith as time goes on.

And thus, we can see the faith of Abraham. In his example we learn what genuine faith looks like. It listens to God, worships Him, obeys Him, trusts Him and keeps growing. How is your faith? Why does our faith need to be like His? Consider Galatians 3:7, *Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.* One of the descriptions of our relationship with God is that of being His children. That goes all the way back to the promise God made to him in Genesis 12:1-3.

So how is your faith? Are you a son of Abraham? Is it growing like it should? Think about it!