

The Faith Of Abraham

What is faith?

We are told that faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see and that it comes from hearing the Word. The Bible also says that without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:1, 6, Rom 10:17). So, in order to please God we must have faith in the unseen; we are called on to believe simply because the Word of God says so. It is very easy to say, "Yes, I have faith, I believe", but the fact is these are just words. It is easy to impress others with words but God knows our heart and whether or not we truly believe. The real proof of our faith comes when it is put to the test.

Abraham's faith

Abraham was 75 when he obeyed God's command to leave his country and his people. He believed God's promise that he would be the father of a great nation and a blessing to all nations (Gen. 12) so he left his country behind in obedience to God.

It took 25 years for Abraham to have a child though his wife Sarah but the Bible tells us that, despite this great period of time, Abraham's faith did not waver. Rom 4:18-22 tells us that *"Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed ... Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead - since he was about a hundred years old - and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why it was credited to him as righteousness"*. Because he clung to his faith in God's promise of a son, Abraham was declared righteous.

The greatest test of Abraham's faith was when God told him to sacrifice his son. In Gen. 22:2 we read where God told Abraham to *"Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about"*. I am sure that Abraham had a long night thinking over what he was told to do but early the next morning he set out for the mountain to sacrifice Isaac. In the same way that he did not waver through unbelief regarding the birth of his son, he did not waver in setting out to obey God's command to sacrifice Isaac. Once again Abraham was fully persuaded that God had the power to do what He had promised which was to make him into a great nation through his one and only son. We read in Heb. 11:19 that *"Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death"*. Once again Abraham faithfully obeyed because he believed that God would keep his promise.

From these three examples of Abraham's faith we see that:

- 1) In faith he left his country because he believed God's promise of making him into a great nation.
- 2) In faith he believed that God would give them a son even though they were both well past it.
- 3) In faith he was willing to sacrifice Isaac because he believed that God would resurrect his son.

Abraham demonstrated his faith by acting on his belief, believing that God was able and would fulfil his promises. James 2:22 says that *"his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did"*. God declared Abraham righteous because he lived out his faith. His faith went beyond head and heart to actions. God put Abraham to the test and he showed his great faith by unwaveringly doing what God commanded. For this reason, Abraham is called the father of all who believe by faith.

Living out our faith

Each person's faith is completely personal. No one can have faith for us. God deals with us individually as He works to increase our faith so that He can draw us closer and use us in His kingdom. God called Abraham His friend and used him mightily to establish the nation of Israel.

We can see from Abraham's example that real faith is accompanied by actions, with the full assurance that God will do what He has promised. It is not likely that we will be tested to Abraham's extreme but our faith is being tested daily. For example, Jesus tells us not to worry but how many of us truly cast worry aside and trust God to get us through? We are more inclined to say, "I believe God will look after me", and then continue on worrying or giving Him a hand to do what we 'believe' He will do for us.

Have you refused God's call because you didn't feel capable? When Moses tried to get away from his call to lead Israel out of Egypt, God said, "*Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? **Now go;** I will help you speak and will teach you what to say*" (Exod. 4:11-12). God promises to equip us to handle whatever He calls us to do but we won't know that personally until we act on it. We will remain an arm-chair Christian until we step out in faith.

Has God called you to leave everything behind and serve Him in some way or in some far off place but you lack the faith to take the step? Jesus said, "*I tell you the truth, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields - and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life*" (Mark 10:29-30). God promises to provide the needs of His servants but no one will ever realise the reality of that promise until they go.

There are many ways in which God can use us and test our faith. It is our job to listen for His call and to respond in faith. The Bible tells us that God honours those who honour Him and that without faith we cannot please Him (1 Sam 2:30, Heb. 11:6) so let us be like Abraham and show our faith by our actions. Let us believe His Word.

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Mick Alexander
leeandmick@gmail.com
www.ChristianIssues.biz