

## ABRAHAM WAS TRIED

Sunday Morning: February 17, 2002

**Text: Hebrews 11:17-19** "By faith Abraham, **when he was tried**, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*. 18. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19. Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

We continue our study of the cloud of witness in Hebrews 11. There is a goodly portion that is dedicated to Abraham and Sarah. I do believe that all of them have the same testimony as that of Abraham and Sarah. They all looked for a city, a heavenly city, who builder and maker is God. They were all under the watch care and protection of the Lord. Studying the lives of these witnesses we discover that all of them had to endure testing. They all had to endure trials, some worse than others, but they all had to endure the cup that God had given them.

I am reminded of Hebrews 11:35 "Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:" One of the trials of our life may be the loss of our lives and yet we can be assured that God can raise us from the dead if he chooses.

Abraham was tested by God when he was told to offer Isaac as a burnt offering.

Abraham loved Isaac. Abraham and Sarah had waited a long time for Isaac. The test that God gave Abraham was to sacrifice the son of his old age and the son of the promise. Abraham knew that God had promised him a seed and he also knew that if Isaac was killed that God would have to raise Isaac up to fulfill that promise.

God made it clear to Abraham it was Isaac that was to be offered and not Ishmael. We know that God does not require human sacrifice, but God does want us to give up our most cherished possessions for Him.

### EXAMINE YOURSELVES

**2 Corinthians 13:5** "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; **prove** your own selves.

**Know** ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates [disapproved]?"

Here we are exhorted to examine our selves. Self examination may require us to put our selves through a trial to see if we be in the faith. Abraham was a man of faith, because he was a man of faith, God would test that faith. By self examination in advance of trials of our faith will help us to pass the test and trials that may come our way.

Self examination of whether we be in the faith will assure us of being approved before God. By examining ourselves whether we be in the faith or not we will discover whether or not we are pleasing Him. God wants us to live by faith so that we can please Him.

### SUBSTANCE AND EVIDENCE

**Hebrews 11:1** "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

This verse defines faith. Faith give substance to things hoped for and evidence that the things hoped for are real even though we can not see them. If we apply faith to our lives we will be rewarded as shown in Hebrews 11:6.

### EVIDENCE, PLEASING GOD

**Hebrews 11:6** "But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Evidence of self examination to whether we be in the faith is our diligence in seeking God. What does it mean to diligently seek Him? I believe it means being diligent in reading your Bible daily and praying continuously as needed. Not only reading your Bible but responding to what you read in obedience. What good does it do you to read your Bible if it doesn't change your life.

### **SUBSTANCE OF HOPE**

**1 Peter 1:3-4** "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a **lively hope** by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4. **To** [for, or leading to] an **inheritance** incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,"

The substance of faith I believe is found in 1 Peter 1:3-4. That substance is in verse four, our inheritance. We need to put substance to our inheritance. What is our inheritance? It is rewards. Colossians 3:24 "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." We read in Hebrews 11:6 that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. He will reward us with our inheritance. God has given us a hope and He has given us a resurrected high priest to keep that hope alive and real.

We are living in hope of this inheritance. The reason that the inheritance is a hope is because the inheritance is reserved in heaven for us by faith. 1 Peter 1:5 "Who are kept by the power of God through faith . . ." This inheritance will be incorruptible, undefiled, and will not fade away if we do not depart from the faith. If we make shipwreck of the faith the inheritance will fade away.

### **HIS MIND IN YOU**

**Philippians 2:5** "Let this **mind be in you**, which was also in **Christ Jesus**:"

Back to 2 Corinthians 13:5 we have the statement "How that Jesus Christ is in you. . ." This statement is not saying that Jesus Christ is literally in us as the Holy Spirit literally dwells in us. Jesus Christ is actually at the right hand of God the Father making intercession for us. He is in his body of flesh and bones and his blood is on the mercy seat. What I believe it means for Christ to be in us is to have the mind of Christ. The mind of Christ is to have the attitude of Christ toward his heavenly Father. We need to have the same mind and attitude the Jesus Christ had toward the Father. The mind of Christ is found in John 4:34 "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Further down in chapter two we have additional light on the mind of Christ. Philippians 2:7 "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, . . ." We can ask our self are we worried about our reputation and are we living a life of a servant?

### **NOT MY WILL BUT THINE**

**Mark 14:36** "And he said, **Abba**, Father, all things *are* possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt."

To have the mind of Christ we need to be able to say "Abba, Father" and mean it from the heart. We need to have total confidence in the Father to accomplish his will in our lives. When we are given a cup from him that we don't like, we accept it, desiring the Father's will to be accomplished in our lives and not our own. The Lord asked the Father to take the cup that he was about to drink away from him, but what was really important to him was his father's will.

If we examine ourselves whether we be in the faith or not and find that we do have the mind of Christ and assuring ourselves that we are seeking approval we will be able to stand the trial of our faith under the hand of God.

## ABRAHAM'S FAITH TESTED

**Hebrews 11:17** "By **faith** Abraham, when he was **tried**, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*."

Abraham's faith was tested by God when God told him to offer up Isaac his only begotten son. We find the sequence of events in the following verses.

### EVIDENCE OF FAITH

**Genesis 22:1-14** "And it came to pass after these things, that **God did tempt Abraham**, and **said** unto him, Abraham: and he (Abraham was listening) said, **Behold, here I am**. 2. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and **offer him** (Abraham's heir) there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

God tested Abraham after Abraham had turned Ishmael out of his house in Genesis 21. Abraham also had a stressful time with Abimelech in Genesis 21. Abimelech's servants had violently taken away one of Abraham's wells and I am sure that this created some hard feeling toward Abimelech. It seems that God test us when we are already under stress.

When God call Abraham's name he responded with "Behold, here I am." This tells us that Abraham was listening for the Lord and responded when he called. The question we need to ask ourselves "Are we listening for the voice of God." I also think we can find meaning in the word "Behold." Abraham knew that God saw him and there was no place to hide.

God wanted Abraham to offer the only son left in his house. He had cast out Ishmael whom he loved along with Hagar and now God wanted him to offer Isaac. The Lord made in His call the statement "Thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest." God knew that Abraham love Isaac, yet God wanted him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering.

After he heard what God wanted him to do, what did Abraham do? Did he ask God to give him some time to think this thing over? No.

### ABRAHAM OBEYED

3. And Abraham rose up **early** (obedience) in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and **rose up, and went** unto the place of which God had told him.

Because Abraham rose up early in the morning, he did not try to put this task off for another day. When he found out what God wanted him to do, he did it. That is an evidence of faith and confidence in the God whom he served.

There are times when you do seek counsel from others but there are times when it is just between you and the Lord. Abraham did not seek the counsel of Sarah. If Abraham did check with Sarah, there may have been a real problem for Abraham to do the will of God. There are times when you do need to check with you wife and listen to her counsel.

### ABRAHAM CONFIDENT

4. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. 5. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and **I and the lad will go** yonder and worship, and **come again to you**. 6. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid *it* upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. 7. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, **Here am I**, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?

When you consider that the Lord asked him to take Isaac to a mountain three days away was part of the trial. If God had asked him to go down the road a mile or two, he could have taken care of it right away. Mount Moriah was three days away and that meant that Abraham had three days to think about what he was about to do. That meant there was a possibility for Abraham to change his mind and go home.

The tests at time can be severe so we need to have it settled in our minds that we are going to be obedient to the Lord command and will. It is the knowledge of God's will that should control our thoughts and not our emotions.

Next, Abraham told his servants to wait here while the lad and I go yonder to worship. It seems to me that giving up something dear to us is an act of worship. Abraham called the offering of Isaac an act of worship. I associate the giving money to the Lord's work an act of worship. Money is very precious to us in many ways. If money was not valuable to us we would put it in tin cans and put it out in the backyard. Money is very important to us and that is the reason we put it in banks for safe keeping.

Abraham made another statement that showed confidence in God. He told his servants that he and the lad would *come again to you*. Abraham must have believed the God would raise Isaac from the dead because Isaac was the child of promise and Isaac had to live to bear children.

Not only was Abraham listen for the call of God but Abraham was listening to his son. Isaac said "My father." Abraham was sensitive to his son's needs and responded with "Here am I."

Isaac and his father must have worship together before because Isaac knew that they needed to have a lamb or a ram for the offering. This is when he asked his father "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

### **GOD WILL PROVIDE**

8. And Abraham said, My son, **God will provide himself a lamb** for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. 9. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. 10. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

Abraham told Isaac that God would provide himself a lamb. Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh.

Isaac asked the question of where is the lamb and that question was answered by John the Baptist in John 1:29 "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

### **ABRAHAM STILL LISTENING**

11. And the angel of the **LORD called** unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, **Abraham:** and he **said, Here am I.**

Here the Lord calls out to Abraham from heaven and he responded by saying as he did before, "Here am I." Was Abraham still listening? He sure was. He continued to listen. If Abraham was not listening he would have missed what God wanted him to do next. That is why it is so important to read your Bible and pray.

### **NEXT THING TO DO**

12. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now **I know that thou fearest God**, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son* from me. 13. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught

in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. 14. And Abraham called the name of that place **Jehovahjireh**: as it is said *to* this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen."

Why was Abraham able to do the things that he did? Abraham feared God. What happens when we lose the fear of God, we stop seeking him, praying, and listening to Him. When this happens then we faint and depart from the faith.

Because Abraham feared God, he did not fail to do the will of God and he finished the work that God wanted him to do.

Jehovahjireh means *God will provide*. When God takes away that which is precious to us he will provide something far better and more satisfying. We need to trust him even in the long drawn out trials that come our way as in the case of Abraham.

When Abraham offered Isaac he believed that God knew what He was doing and obeyed knowing he could trust Him. Abraham was approved by this work of faith. Look at the next verses.

### **ABRAHAM JUSTIFIED**

**James 2:20-25** "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that **faith without works is dead**? 21. Was not Abraham our father **justified by works** (evidence), when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

In Hebrews 11 it says that by faith Abraham offered Isaac and obviously there were works involved. There were three days of travel. Three days to change your mind. Abraham was justified by works which is the evidence of his faith. Abraham was approved by God for this act of faith. God liked the way Abraham performed. You're my friend.

### **REWARD, BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH**

**Romans 4:4** "Now to him that **worketh** [present middle participle (without faith)] is the **reward** not **reckoned** [present passive indicative, a process, being reckoned] of grace, but of **debt**." (It takes faith to get grace, Rom 5:2)

Here in Romans 4:4 we have a contrast to the verses in James 2. There is no contradiction in the scriptures and you can trust that fact. These two verse seem to present a contradiction, but that is not the case. If there was a contradiction then the scripture could not be divinely inspired.

Let us look at verse four a little closer. The word *worketh* is a present middle participle. There is a glaring absence of the word *faith*. These works in verse four are works for oneself and apart from faith. The man who works for himself without faith then he can expect his reward to be on the basis of *debt* and not on the basis of *grace*.

This verse is not talking about salvation but rewards. Rewards are awarded because of service. Colossians is very clear that the reward of the inheritance is on the basis of works. Colossians 3:23-24 "And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24. Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."

Abraham was looking for a heavenly city on the basis of faith and God's promise of that heavenly city. If Abraham looked for that city on works alone then he might expect to received that reward on the basis of debt. When we work where we think that God owes me, you will find out in a hurry that God does not operate that way. God does not owe us anything and we owe him everything.

The reason that works done on the basis of grace will be rewarded is because it takes faith to have grace to serve God in an acceptable manner. Romans 5:1-2 "Therefore being justified by

faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." This verse in Romans tells us that we are justified by faith and we find out that we are justified by faith that include works from James 2. Justification by faith is approval from God because we pleased him by faith that was not abandoned. In verse 2 we see that it takes faith to access the grace that we need to be able to continue in the faith and not fall. Why do we need to access grace by faith? It is because of Hebrews 12:28 "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us **have** [present active subjunctive, may we have] **grace**, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:" Only works done in the power of the grace of God will be acceptable works. Works done apart from grace will be burned because they are stubble. Hebrews 12:29 "For our God *is* a consuming fire."

In Romans 4:4 is telling us that if you work for yourself with out grace and faith you are going to say that God owes you. God will not reward that kind of works.

22. Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23. And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and **it** (faith) was **imputed** unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Abraham was a man of faith. He was obedient putting evidence to the substance of his faith and God called him His friend.

#### WORKS BY GRACE

**Romans 4:5** "But to him that **worketh** [present middle participle, working for himself] **not** (without grace), but **believeth** [present active participle, which is the work of God, John 6:29] on him that justifieth the ungodly, his [the] **faith** [nominative case, subject] is **counted** [present passive indicative, a process, being reckoned] for **righteousness**."

Here in verse 5 we see verse 4 brought into proper perspective. The person who worketh not for himself apart from faith and grace but believes in the present tense, can expect to be rewarded for his work by the power of God's grace. Believing in the present tense is the evidence of faith and it is the work of God. We have the definition of the work of God that counts in John 6:29 ". . . This is the work of God, that ye **believe** [present active] on **him** (Christ our high priest) whom **he** (the Father) hath sent." I believe that the present active participle of believe is equivalent to faith. If we believe on Him that **justifieth** [present active participle, a process] the ungodly child of God faith is going to be continually counted or reckoned [present passive indicative, a process of reckoning] to that individual *faith*. The word **for** is the Greek word εἰν and it has been translated by some as **leading to** or **resulting in** when the noun it modifies is in the accusative case. The noun **righteousness** is in the accusative case. Because believeth is a process of trust and obedience, and **justification** in this verse is a process, and the reckoning of faith is a process then all of these processes will result in righteousness.

Keep in mind that faith had to be reckoned to Abraham because faith was not revealed until after the law. Galatians 3:23 "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." If faith had been revealed it would have been in vain until the resurrection Christ to be our high priest. 1 Corinthians 15:14 "And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain."

24. Ye see then how that by **works** (evidence) a man is justified, and not by **faith only**. 25. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way?"

The works in the verse is not works alone but works of faith. It is works because Abraham's faith gave substance to what God promised about Isaac and the seed.

Rahab hid the spies of the nation of Israel that came to spy out Jericho and helped them to escape. Because of this work she was justified. It was not by works alone that she was justified but by works of faith. The evidence of the hope produced by faith was the scarlet line that she hung in the window. That scarlet line was used to identify the first born who was to get the birthright inheritance. Her hope of an inheritance in the land flowing with milk and honey was fulfilled to the point that she was in the lineage of Jesus Christ.

### PROVING YOUR FAITH

**1 Peter 1:3-9** "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a **lively hope** by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4. To an **inheritance** incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

The noun *inheritance* is in the accusative case and the preposition that modifies it is *εἰν*. What that means is that the preposition *εἰν* can be translated **resulting in** or **leading to** and in this case an inheritance which will be our reward of age-lasting life. Hebrews 9:15 "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, . . . (that) . . . they which are called **might** receive **the promise** of eternal [age-lasting] inheritance."

5. Who are kept by the power of God **through faith** unto **salvation** (so great salvation of the soul) ready to be revealed in the last time.

If we depart from the faith our inheritance of reigning over ten cities or five cities will be forfeited because we did not live by faith.

This salvation is not the salvation of being born from above but the so great salvation of Hebrews 2:3 "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*;" This salvation has to do with entrance into the kingdom of the heavens.

The word **salvation** is in the accusative case and is modified by the preposition *εἰν* which would be translated **leading to** or **resulting in** salvation. This salvation is defined in verse 9 as what we will receive if we continue in the faith to the end.

6. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold **temptations** [trials]:

There are time when it is needful for us to be tested and there are times when we do not need to be under the heaviness of being tested. We are not tested 7/24/52 unless we can take it. I am reminded of Isaiah 57:16 "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: **for the spirit should fail before me**, and the souls *which* I have made." God does not want our spirit or soul to fail, He knows our limits. 1 Corinthians 10:13 "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*." What a comfort to know this verse when it comes to trials and testing.

7. That the **trial** [proving] of your **faith**, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be **tried** [present passive, proved] with fire, **might be found** unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

It will be the proven faith of the individual that will be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ to set up his kingdom. Notice that the words **might be found** are used before the words praise, honor and glory. The reason for this is that it might not be found unto praise, honor, and glory. Why? Because we may make shipwreck of the faith. We may not pass the testing of our faith. If we pass the testing of our faith then we will have honor and glory at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

8. Whom having not seen, ye **love** (obey, evidence of faith); in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet **believing** (faithfully trusting his Word, evidence of faith), ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

The word **love** is in the present tense which means we are faithful in obedience to his commandments. John 14:15 "If ye love me, keep my commandments." The word believing is a present active participle and is the same word found in Romans 4:5. By believing in the present tense we are doing the work of God and we will be given credit for please God. If we continue to believe in the present tense then we will received the end of our faith which is agelasting life in the coming kingdom of heaven.

9. Receiving the **end** (consummation, not shipwreck) **of your faith**, even the **salvation** (so great salvation, salvation in Christ, 2 Timothy 2:10) of *your* souls."

This salvation of the soul will be entered into if we keep the faith. This salvation I believe is the so great salvation of Hebrews 2:3. I also believe it is the salvation that the elect may have according to 2 Timothy 2:10 "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." This salvation is for those who are saved and in Christ. Notice that this salvation may not be obtained because of the subjunctive of the verb **obtain**. This salvation in Christ Jesus is with agelasting glory and is a reference to the kingdom age when Christ will reign for 1,000 years.

### CONTINUE IN THE FAITH

**Acts 14:22** "Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the **faith**, and that we must through much **tribulation** enter into the kingdom of God."

As a pastor teacher I want to confirm you as well as myself to continue in the faith. Continue to please God. I do not want any of us to stop believing in the present tense. I want to continue to remind you that God is a rewarder of those who live by faith and continue to seek him. We will have tests and trials that will produce tribulation, but that is what is required for us to enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

### TRYING OF YOUR FAITH

**James 1:2-4** "My brethren, **count it all joy** when ye fall into divers **temptations** [trials]; 3. Knowing *this*, that the **trying** [proving] **of your faith** worketh **patience** [upomonh, endurance]. 4. But let **patience** [endurance] have *her* perfect work, that ye may be **perfect** [mature, complete] and entire, wanting nothing."

The testing of our faith is not fun and that is when we have to count it all joy. By counting it all joy you are anticipating the blessings that are coming because of the test of your faith. Testing and trials prove your faith. It is through tests that you able to know whether you are in the faith and that Christ is in you. It is through the proving of your faith that you gain endurance. Without exercise our bones and muscles would deteriorate.

We need to accept the trials and tests with joy, even if we have to count it all joy. With out the trials and tests we would not know the power of His grace to endure to the end. It takes endurance and its perfect work to be mature, complete, lacking nothing. If we respond to this

wonderful work in our hearts and lives we will not depart from the faith and so continue to please God.

May the Lord help us to come to the end of our journey here on the earth and hear Matthew 25:23 ". . . Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."