

ABRAHAM'S FAITH "To Faith"

Introduction-

1. The Purpose of Faith – Rom 1:16-17

Rom 1:16-17

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith." NAS

As we discussed the last time, faith has a purpose. The purpose of faith is to reveal the righteousness of God.

2. Abraham, from faith to faith by faith

i. Saving faith

We saw that Abraham moved from faith. He moved out of a central position of trust in God that through him, the Messiah would come according to the flesh. He had faith in God who justifies the wicked (Rom 4:5) and believed the gospel the Scripture proclaimed to him that "all nations will be blessed through you." (Gal 3:8)

What did this faith work in Abraham's life? What all true faith works in anybody who has it, action.

ii. Faith causes action

James 2:14-18

14 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?

15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food.

16 If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?

17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. NIV

James 2:26 "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." NIV

Real faith causes action. Real faith affects the way in which we live. Religion may make us go through rituals. But faith propels us to act in accordance to our convictions.

God made a promise to Abraham, and Abraham believed the promise. As Rom 4:21 says, he was "fully persuaded that God had the power to do what he had promised." As we examine Abraham's walk of faith, we can learn much about what to do and what not to do.

iii. Two steps forward, one step back

a) Victory and blessing – Gen 14, Heb 7:1-7

b) Receipt of the promise – Gen 15, 12

Gen 15:5

He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." NIV

Gen 12:2

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. NIV

Contrast these promises to the circumstances of Gen 16:1.

c) Backslide – Gen 16:1

Gen 16:1

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; NIV

Gen 16:2-4

2 so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said.

3 So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.

4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. NIV

Let's look at this scene: 1) much time had passed since the promise came [ten years]; 2)the woman doubted the word of the Lord [through misinterpretation]; 3)the husband agreed to what the woman said. Is it just me, or does this sound familiar?

*What was the result of trying to walk from faith to faith by the works of the flesh?
Ishmael!*

3. The Ishmael's of Life – Gen 16:15; Gal 4:21-31

Gen 16:15

So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. NIV

Gal 4:21-31

21 Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says?

22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.

23 His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.

24 These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar.

25 Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.

- 26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.
- 27 For it is written: "Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband."
- 28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.
- 29 At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.
- 30 But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son."
- 31 Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman. NIV

I. The Covenant Sealed

1. Numerical Significance

i. Eleven – Gen 12:1-4; 16:16, 12

Ishmael was born 11 years after the promise given in Gen 12. Eleven is the number of lawlessness and disorder.

Gen 16:12

He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers." NIV

ii. Thirteen – Gen 17:1, 24-25

The Lord restates the promise to Abraham thirteen years after Ishmael's birth. Thirteen is the number of rebellion.

Gen 17:24-25

24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised,
25 and his son Ishmael was thirteen; NIV

iii. Eight – Gen 17:12, Luke 2:21

Gen 17:12

For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner--those who are not your offspring. NIV

Eight is the number of resurrection and new beginning in Scripture. Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day. It was the first time he bled for us.

Luke 2:21

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. NIV

2. Circumcision Established – Gen 17

i. God will be our God - Gen 17:1-8

Gen 17:1-8

- 1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless.
- 2 I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."
- 3 Abram fell facedown, and God said to him,
- 4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.
- 5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.
- 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.
- 7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.
- 8 The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God." NIV

ii. Circumcision is the sign of the covenant – Gen 17:9-11

Gen 17:9-11

- 9 Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come.
- 10 This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised.
- 11 You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. NIV

iii. The promise restated – Gen 17:15-19

Gen 17:15-19

- 15 God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah.
- 16 I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."
- 17 Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?"
- 18 And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"
- 19 Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. NIV

3. Moving to Faith

i. Circumcision of the household – Gen 17:23-27

Gen 17:23-27

- 23 On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him.
- 24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised,
- 25 and his son Ishmael was thirteen;

26 Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that same day.
27 And every male in Abraham's household, including those born in his household or bought from a foreigner, was circumcised with him. NIV

ii. Circumcision, sign of righteousness held by faith – Rom 4:8-11
Rom 4:8-11

8 Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

9 Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness.

10 Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before!

11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. NIV

Again, it is God's economy. Faith = righteousness. This is why we read what we do in Rom 14:23 and Heb 11:6.

Rom 14:23

But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin. NIV

Heb 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. NIV

iii. Circumcision has value by reason of faith – Rom 4:11-12

Rom 4:11-12

11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.

12 And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. NIV

II. Our Circumcision

1. Circumcised with Christ – Col 2:9-13

Col 2:9-13

9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, NKJV

2. Circumcised in Heart – Deut 30:6

Deut 30:6

The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live. NIV

3. Circumcised by the Spirit

i. Circumcised – Rom 2:28-29

Rom 2:28-29

28 A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical.

29 No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; **and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit**, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God. NIV

ii. Seal of covenants – Rom 4:11; Eph 1:13

Rom 4:11

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.

NIV

Eph 1:13

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, NIV

III. Three Things That Matter

1. Keeping God's Commands – 1 Cor 7:19; I John 3:23

1 Cor 7:19

Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. **Keeping God's commands is what counts.** NIV

1 John 3:23

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. NIV

2. Faith Expressing Itself through Love – Gal 5:6, 14

Gal 5:6, 14 NIV

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. **The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.**

14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

3. The New Creation – Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17

Gal 6:15 NIV

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; **what counts is a new creation.**

2 Cor 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! NIV

i. Faith and grace – Rom 4:16

Rom 4:16

16 Therefore, **the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace** and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring-not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. NIV

Conclusion-

When we believe God's promise of salvation through Jesus Christ, our faith is counted as righteousness. God seals us by a circumcision of our hearts through His Holy Spirit that we might put off the dead deeds of the flesh and walk by grace in the new creation to bear much fruit.