

"The Walk of Faith"

Part 13

11:1-40

Introduction: Tonight in our study of Hebrews we are again returning to chapter 11 and as we do we are again stepping into the life of Abraham. In our study tonight the writer of Hebrews is taking us on a journey with Abraham and we shall see the pinnacle of his faith.

Abraham made many mistakes in his life as he followed God. He panicked when he faced the famine of Genesis 12 after he arrived at Canaan. He lied to Pharaoh when he arrived in Egypt. He later lied to Abimelech as fear over shadowed his faith. He listened to Sarah when she suggested that he marry Hagar. So, just like our lives there were many faults in Abraham's walk. I need to also remind you that these mistakes all contributed to the growth of Abraham. Now I know there are people who would disagree with that statement but let me remind you of a verse.

Romans 8:28

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

ALL THINGS means ALL THINGS so that would include even our mistakes. Someone would ask, "How can the times I stumble and fall into sin work together for good?" It is after the believer steps or falls into sin that he or she longs to be more like Jesus. It is often the times we are controlled by the flesh that make us long to be free of the battle with sin. Let me show you another verse.

Matthew 5:6

⁶ Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Abraham's mistakes were part of his growing process but it is also important to know that his mistakes had consequences and some of the consequences would impact the world even in our day.

So, if we were to draw Abraham's life on a graph we would see that from his call in Genesis 11 and 12 to the offering of Isaac in Genesis 22 his faith was continuing to increase.

Tonight in our study we are going to look at how great the faith of Abraham had become over the years as he had learned to trust God in his life.

I. The Examples of Faith

Part 10

A. The Testing of Abraham

Notice Hebrews 11:17

The first thing we need to see in this verse is that when Abraham was called to offer up his son Isaac as a burnt offering this was a TEST of his faith. The verse tells us "Abraham was TRIED". Abraham's faith had failed several times throughout his journey in the land of Canaan. Abraham had lied to pharaoh and he had lied to Abimelech and in both of those situations it was because he did not trust God.

Genesis 12:11-13

¹¹ *And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:*

¹² *Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.*

¹³ *Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.*

Genesis 20:1-2

And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.

² *And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.*

Here we see 2 different times when Abraham allowed fear to overtake his life. Now we must also understand that this was a plan which he and Sarah had formulated before he ever left Haran.

Genesis 20:9-13

⁹ *Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? And what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? Thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done.*

¹⁰ *And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing?*

¹¹ *And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.*

¹² *And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.*

¹³ *And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt shew unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother.*

This was a plan which Abraham carried with him on his journey as he followed God and it was a plan that was made to fill in when his faith fell short. It was God's desire to strip Abraham of all self-dependence and so throughout the years God chipped away at his life by testing his faith.

Notice Hebrews 11:17 again.

The event which the writer points to here is recorded in Genesis 22.

Notice Genesis 22:1-14

Now let me show you our verse in Hebrews again.

Hebrews 11:17

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

Now if we ever wondered if Abraham was serious about sacrificing his son all we need to do is notice the word "OFFERED" here in Hebrews 11:17. The word has the idea that Abraham carried out the sacrifice. In other words, Abraham was determined to follow through with offering his son Isaac as a burnt offering and God knew his heart.

Now this is amazing when we consider all that was involved here.

1. This was his son.

Apart from the promises of God which would come through Isaac, we must just keep in mind that this was the biological son of Abraham and when God asked for Isaac as a sacrifice Abraham was willing to do as God had asked.

2. This was his ONLY begotten son.

Let me show you what had happened right before this.

Notice Genesis 22:1

Here we see that the offering of Isaac happened AFTER THESE THINGS. What were THESE THINGS?

Notice Genesis 21:8-12

Here we see that Hagar and Ishmael were put out of Abraham's family. Therefore, Isaac is called the ONLY begotten son of Abraham. The word "begotten" means "one of a kind, unique". Isaac was unique in the fact that he was a miracle son born to Abraham and Sarah at the ages of 100 and 90. The point which we need to understand is that Abraham had no other children and there was no likely hood that Abraham would have more children by Sarah.

3. Isaac was the one through whom the promises were to be kept alive.

Hebrews 11:17-18

¹⁷ 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:

To kill Isaac was to cut off the promises of God.

Notice what Matthew Henry says concerning this trial of Abraham:

"He was put upon it after he had received the promises, that this Isaac should build up his family, that in him his seed should be called (v. 18), and that he should be one of the progenitors of the Messiah, and all nations blessed in him; so that, in being called to offer up his Isaac, he seemed to be called to destroy and cut off his own family, to cancel the promises of God, to prevent the coming of Christ, to destroy the whole world, to sacrifice his own soul and his hopes of salvation, and to cut off the church of God at one blow: a most terrible trial!"

B. The Foundation of Abraham

Notice Hebrews 11:19

Here we see that Abraham's foundation in the midst of this trial was his faith. He had faith that when he plunged the knife into his son that God would be able to raise him from the dead.

This is amazing FAITH! Abraham had no evidence of resurrection before this. He did not know that Jesus would die and then be raised. But he believed that God had the power to raise his son from the dead. How did he come up with this much faith? God had brought him through many trials and every time Abraham was able to see God's faithfulness. When Sarah became pregnant with Isaac Abraham was able to see the mighty power of God. Every test and every trial brought Abraham deeper into a life of faith.

Conclusion:

This is why James wrote the words below.

James 1:2-3

² *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;*

³ *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*

Peter also wrote this:

1 Peter 1:6-7

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

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

Notice the words of Pink:

"As the suspending of a heavy weight upon a chain reveals either its weakness or its strength, so God places His people in varied circumstances which manifest that state of their hearts - whether or not their trust really be in Him."