

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon title: By Faith, Abraham, Hebrews 11:8-19

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INTRODUCTION: Today, we are going to look at another man in the Hall of Faith: Abraham. There are three main facts I want you to learn about Abraham:

1. Abraham's life of faith set the standard for all believers.
2. Abraham was still a man of faith the day he died.
3. Abraham realized that, ultimately, everything of his was at God's disposal.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 11:8-12 ⁸ *By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.* ⁹ *By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.* ¹⁰ *For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.* ¹¹ *And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise.* ¹² *And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.*

First, ABRAHAM'S LIFE OF FAITH SET THE STANDARD FOR ALL BELIEVERS.

- When he was called by God, he went.
- As he went, he lived out his faith.
- As he lived out his faith, he faced new faith challenges.
- As he faced new faith challenges, God strengthened his faith each time.

Abraham would have known about Abel, Enoch, and Noah. He would have known how God related to people on earth at that time. And, then God chose Abraham to begin a new work, a new way of interacting with people. For the first time in history, God chose a man to be the father of a chosen people, a people God would interact with in a loving and covenant relationship.

God's plan was that through Abraham other nations would be blessed. God would pour his love and blessings into them, and they in turn, would pour his love and blessings onto others.

Through Abraham, a nation would be grow, which would have a legal system, which would bring about justice, a health system, which would result in the healthiest people on earth and a civilization whose government would be a theocracy and a military that was unstoppable—but only when they chose to be on God's side.

Now, all of these things did not happen overnight. All of these things began when God called one man and that man responded in faith.

APPLICATION: Here's a question I want you to consider: Does your faith set a standard? Or, do you even have a life of faith? Listen to me... A life of pessimism is not a life of faith. A life *dedicated* to flaw finding and complaining is not a life of faith. A life of inconsistency is not a life of faith. If a non-believer looked at you, what evidence of faith do you have that you are indeed a believer?

Abraham had his moments. He did not always do what God wanted. He had his bad days, but overall, Abraham was a man of faith and set the standard for all believers.

Second, ABRAHAM WAS STILL A MAN OF FAITH THE DAY HE DIED, just like Able, Enoch, and Noah.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 11:13-14 ¹³ *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.* ¹⁴ *People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.*

EXPLANATION: Abraham saw all the things promised of God but from a distance. He believed God would fulfill all his promises and had no doubt about it.

I really like what the scripture says; they admitted they were foreigners and strangers on earth. Your translation may say "pilgrim." As we know, a pilgrim was

a person looking for a new country. A foreigner is a stranger in a new land until citizenship has been earned and granted.

I believe the Christian life is one where the closer we get to God, the less attached we are to this earth. God tests our faith, he challenges our faith, and he strengthens our faith so we will be closer to him. If your faith is in people, you'll be gravely disappointed, right? If your faith is in God, you won't ever be disappointed.

As your faith strengthens...

- You'll realize this earth is really just a ship taking you on a voyage to another place.
- You'll realize the brevity and frailty of this life and the eternity and firmness of the next life.
- You'll realize your actions in this temporary life will bring about either eternal reward or consequences.

Review:

- Abraham's life set the standard for all believers.
- Abraham was still a man of faith the day he died.

Third, ABRAHAM REALIZED THAT, ULTIMATELY, EVERYTHING OF HIS WAS AT GOD'S DISPOSAL.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 11:17-19 ¹⁷ *By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, ¹⁸ even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."* ¹⁹ *Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.*

EXPLANATION: Abraham was told by God to take his only son and sacrifice him. We know of nowhere in the Bible where God condoned a child sacrifice. And, God did not allow Abraham to sacrifice his son, but he certainly brought him to the point where he was willing and ready to do it.

Now think about it. God gave Abraham a direct, clear, and binding promise his offspring would come through Isaac. Abraham watched his son grow. He protected

his son from bad things. He educated his son. He raised him to be a good young man. He knew God's promise would be fulfilled through Isaac. And, then God told him to take what was most precious to him, his son of promise, and sacrifice him.

God had strengthened Abraham's faith so much that the scripture says he reasoned God could even raise Isaac from the dead. Such reasoning only came after multiple tests of faith!

Let's say, from the beginning what would have happened if in his initial interview with Abraham, God had said, *"You and your wife are going to have a son in your old age. Through him there will be more people than there are stars in the sky. And, then, when he is a young man, before he has had any children, I want you to sacrifice him."*

If God had dumped all this on Abraham at one time, Abraham would have considered it some type of riddle, or some type of sick joke, and he would have never come out of his confusion.

But, God, in his kindness and love, tested Abraham's faith, incrementally increasing his faith over time, so when he told Abraham to sacrifice his son, he was willing to do it *knowing God would keep his promise even though on the human level it appeared impossible.*

Here are some of Abraham's faith challenges:

- During God's initial calling to him to pack his bags and move, he didn't even know where he was going.
- During his travels, he went through many areas and found himself in Egypt, due to a famine.
- He messed up by lying to the pharaoh about his wife, and then Pharaoh kicked him out of Egypt. Now, Abraham had to have faith that God would fix his mess.
- Then we have the whole situation with his brother-in-law, Lot, and the whole Sodom and Gomorrah mess.
- The next step of faith was the covenant itself, which you can read about in Genesis 18
- Then came Abraham's disobedience by fathering a child with his maid, followed by faith God, once again, would fix his mess.

- Then three angels visit Abraham.
- Then another recap of the Sodom and Gomorrah mess and Abraham’s plea for God to spare the cities, which he did not.
- Next, two more angels visit.
- Later on, Isaac is born.

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 22:1-14 ¹*Sometime later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied.*

²*Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”*

³*Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”*

⁶*Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together,*

⁷*Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?”*

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

⁸*Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.*

⁹*When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”*

“Here I am,” he replied.

¹² *“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”*

¹³ *Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.*

¹⁴ *So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.”*

Go back to—

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 11:15-16 ¹⁵ *If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return.* ¹⁶ *Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

EXPLANATION: Abraham could have returned to his original home, but he wasn't thinking about the country he left. He'd been through so much that he accepted the fact that whatever God wanted, he wanted. He realized it was all God's. God could do with Abraham's belongings whatever he wanted to.

At some point he realized the Promised Land was still only a stopping point because heaven was his true home.

CONCLUSION: By Faith, Abraham—

I trust all of us realize challenges to our faith strengthens us, and all we have is really at his disposal. I heard someone recently say how grateful he was God still gave him the opportunity to serve. What a great attitude.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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