

Lessons from Israel 5

The father of Israel 1

In many of our most important New Testament passages of scripture, we find the name Abraham. He, an Old Testament saint, is mentioned in contexts that specifically address salvation.

His is an example of belief - an example of faith. And we see this in our first text of the day in Romans 3:

23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

27 ¶ Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Chapter 4:

1 ¶ What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Where our New Testament understanding of salvation is explained, we find Abraham. He believed God.

Even in those churches that were hearing and tempted to believe "another gospel," the name Abraham is brought forward as an example. See Galatians 3:

5 ¶ He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

In Abraham we see a man that takes God at His word. God makes promises, which Abraham simply believes.

We have the story of Abraham in the Old Testament to confirm this. See Genesis 15:

1 ¶ After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

And...

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

6 ¶ And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Abraham's story is one of faith. This will be the story of any Christian who makes an impact for God. We must believe Him.

If we want to see a great example of faith - full reliance upon God - we can examine his life.

There is no better place than Genesis 22:

1 ¶ And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he 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 there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

Over the years, I have begun to look at this command in a different way. It is a very difficult command to deal with from a human perspective, especially when we consider the promises Abraham received, but it points us forward in scripture.

It causes us to recall some words of the New Testament, like those in Hebrews 10:

10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

11 ¶ And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

Or those in Romans 8:

31 ¶ What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

For the New Testament believer, these scriptures ought to be top of mind when we see the example of Abraham, because we know that God gave His only begotten son for our salvation.

Let us go back to Genesis 22:

3 ¶ And Abraham rose up early 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.

Abraham was immediately and fully obedient - prepared to make this sacrifice.

This was not just a show. He intended to do what God commanded.

This is also confirmed in the New Testament, see 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,

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.

He came to this event, believing. That which he believed then is consistent with our belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ, whom God delivered up for us all, who died, was buried, and rose again from the dead!

Back to our context in Genesis 22:

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.

This text is consistent with the Hebrews 11 declaration - we will go and we will return.

He goes to the place believing.

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?

Consider this interaction. Put yourself, if you can, in the position of Abraham. Consider the weight he must have been bearing at this time.

Or put yourself in the position of Isaac. Consider all he must have been thinking and feeling. Yet both proceed, believing.

8 ¶ And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

There is a total reliance upon God displayed here that is worth noting.

Whatever happens, God will have to do it.

Human thinking would insist exactly the opposite. To obtain a just outcome, we may argue, Abraham has to take action.

To ignore, to disobey, to not follow through is certainly the way forward, right?

Abraham still has time to back out.

But Abraham believes God.

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.

Do not fail at this point to recall the words of Hebrews 11. Abraham was "Accounting that God was able to raise him up," and stretched forth his hand with this in mind. But...

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

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.

God, even at this moment, fully confirms his intention to follow through. "I know you fear God." This is the true testimony of Abraham's heart.

He has not withheld that which is most dear to him. He has not withheld the son of promise.

He has taken all he had at this moment, his only hope, and offered it freely to the Lord. The Lord who is faithful.

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.

Consistent with God's character, He provides, sparing Abraham's son and at the same time knowing He will not spare His own.

Grace is given, as a sacrifice is provided. Only by God. Only by His loving care. Not because Abraham took it into his own hands, but exactly the reverse, because he left it in God's hands.

15 ¶ And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

And the promises of God are repeated again. Even pointing us forward to the time when Jew and Gentile alike would be blessed when Jesus Christ would be offered up. Not spared, but indeed made the perfect, spotless sacrifice for our sin.

19 So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

Abraham had faith in God and it meant something. It manifested itself in action. James 2 expands on this:

18 ¶ Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

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 was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Meaning, faith is seen. It works its way into life. It is manifested in action.

This was certainly the case in Abraham's life.