

## Sermon Trust - Abraham 21/2/2021

*Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness* Gen 15 v 6 and Hebrews 11

Father, please open our minds by your Spirit to understand this great principle and to know how to act upon it. In Jesus' name.

Not "believed IN God " the devils also believe and tremble but " Abraham believed God " in what God said in appearances, words, visions. Active verb – trust. And Abraham acted on that trust which for him and for us involves choices.

I doubt that that trust /faith arrived fully formed as a gift, it grew through his relationship with God from his call in Ur (Acts 7). God the prime mover Abraham, the friend of God. 2 Chron 20/James 2

His story is scripture and ALL scripture is God breathed and useful so we look at what the NT says about events in OT to understand both better.

Genesis 12. God called Abraham and promised to make his descendants a great nation to bless him and make him a blessing and ( the Messianic promise) in you ( in your particular descendant Jesus gal 3 ) all nations of the earth will be blessed "

So he went with his wife Sarah and nephew Lot all the people and all the property he had. A bigger cheese than just a wandering Aramean. (Deut 27). He did what God told him to do. He did get stuck in Haran ½ way for some time

--did he do everything right?

Well... he reached the land then God promised the land to his descendants as a proof of the call and promise of obedience (Deut 28) but he went on to Egypt. (Gen 12). At the border he told Sarah to say she was his sister because she was so beautiful he feared somebody would kill him and take her, unmarried into his harem -risking rape enslavement adultery. Pharaoh did, which put God's purpose for Abraham and His messianic plan for mankind at risk of no Abrahamic descendant Messiah.

God sent plagues. Pharaoh sent them away with rich gifts. Sarah was not violated. The promise was repeated, the covenant made (Gen15) and the sign of circumcision given (gen 17) .

Then in a famine (gen 20) Abraham did the same thing again he went to Abimelech king of Gerar, told Sarah to say she was his sister. Messianic plan at risk 2. God tells Abimelech he is a dead man and Abraham is a prophet who will pray for him. Abraham prays, God forgives and heals Abimelech and his wife and female slaves so they could bear children and Sarah was not violated.

Have you ever prayed for someone else what you desire deeply for yourself and seen God grant it for someone else? Do we trust God when He delays on His promises or to answer prayer?

One Walcott wife, Phyl Taviner prayed daily for 35 years for her husband to come to faith which he did just before he died.

Gen 16 Abraham agrees to Sarah's plan for a child, her Egyptian maid Hagar. Messianic plan at risk again.<sup>3</sup> Ishmael was born but he is not the promised child. 13 years later in Gen 17 Abraham asks God that Ishmael may be the child to inherit. 17 God said no. Isaac who will be born this time next year will be the child of the promise God healed Sarah and enabled her to conceive Isaac. Abraham's faith was not yet fully formed. God is faithful to his call, promise and covenant with Abraham. He blessed later with 6 sons with Keturah after Sarah's death and unnumbered sons of concubines. He always does. He is Sovereign and He knows best.

3 bad choices

? any good ones

He gave Lot first choice of land when their combined flocks were too big for the pasture. gen 13. Lot chose what looked better, the greener Jordan valley but went to live in Sodom, was captured in a war so Abraham with 318 trained fighting men all born in his household chased the army out of the land to north of Damascus, defeated it rescued Lot and all the women and people who had been enslaved. He paid a tithe to the priest king Melchizedek, knowing him to be a priest of God (also a type of Christ). He circumcised his household when instructed as a sign of the covenant God made with him when God said walk before me and be blameless. gen 17. He called on the name of the Lord. God answered his prayer not to kill the innocent with the guilty in Sodom haggling with God which saved Lot from Sodom (again)

Gen 18. God repeats the promise adding I have chosen him that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice so that The Lord may bring to

Abraham what He has promised him. That seems to demand action in response to the promise and he did command his household with Isaac sending the others away well provided for. Gen 25

Then THE TEST Gen 22-

This time God put the Messianic plan at risk in the sacrificial killing of a son foreshadowing very closely the tests He was to endure in Jesus. Abraham take your son your one- of- a- kind son (conceived miraculously) whom you love, go to Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering ( later for sin guilt and peace Lev 5). Abraham went. A hideous choice. God's command had he heard right? Kill my child, the child of your promise? No scripture to check it against, only his relationship with God -a friend asking that of him. It was contrary to rules of sacrifice (later revealed) contrary to the promise that Isaac alone not another son would be the child to carry the promise and covenant (until his descendant the Messiah. Jesus would come miraculously in the flesh to fulfill all and bless all nations) It does not look like righteousness or justice if he did it would he be blameless or blessed? It seemed to be against all his hopes and God's repeated promises and commands.

A 3 day walk with Isaac, now about 13. (I think the word "boy" also translates as young man), old enough to resist- the same age as Ishmael when God told him to send him away. Not Isaac too. We are too old to have another son. Was God now breaking His covenant putting the promise and Messianic plan at risk? Foreshadows temptations of Jesus in the wilderness and in the garden.

2 issues

1 God's trustworthiness

2 His Servant's obedience to death (Phil2)

Isaac, the sacrifice, makes no objection. He carries the wood as they go off together "my father I see the fire and the wood but where is the lamb?" "God himself will provide a lamb for the sacrifice"- a lie? a prophetic statement?

Abraham is a prophet He tells the servant to wait with the donkey "I and the boy/young man will go over there and worship and come again to you". He seems to think all will be well somehow. As he reached out his hand to slaughter (a terrible word used of animals in sacrifice) God intervenes, stops him and reveals the lamb. He has provided (John the Baptist later)

Test passed

God knows Abraham has not withheld his son from Him. Didn't God know anyway? Is this more for Abraham's benefit than for God's? God repeats the promise and blessing "because you have obeyed my voice" and God repeated the reason to Isaac himself when He confirmed the covenant with him Gen 26

1 Abraham needed righteousness credited to him because like all of us he did not get everything right

2 Abraham believed God

3 God did the crediting validated as it were by Jesus' sacrifice, later fulfilling the promise covenant and Messianic plan. So credited with righteousness through faith?

What sort of faith?

Through faith AND obedience, or is the obedience proof of the faith?

Let's look at N T

Heb 11 11 "By faith Abraham even though he was past age and Sarah herself was barren was enabled to become a father because he CONSIDERED Him faithful who had made the promise"

God healed Sarah so she could conceive Gen 21 v1 .No action by Abraham involved. Gen 21 -just after he prayed for Abimelech's women all of whom God of the same barrenness. Through Abraham

Heb 11 9 Abraham REASONED that God could raise the dead and FIGURATIVELY speaking he did receive Isaac back from death This faith seems to be a matter of the mind, sometimes agonising, sometimes enduring. Not blind, facing facts overcoming feelings - not based on them (Jesus in the garden) trusting what he knows of God.

Both options involve sin -killing or disobeying. The dilemma of two apparently mutually inconsistent commands was resolvable only by resurrection. The test figuratively speaking prefigures Jesus in whom the power and authority to credit righteousness from faith was paid for at the cross. But where Isaac was rescued, Jesus was forsaken and rejected. He saved others. Let him save himself if he is the Christ the chosen one Luke 23. Save yourself and come down from the cross that we may see and believe Mark 1

If Jesus saved Himself, no one else would be saved but the rulers refused to believe unless He did. Romans 3. We are justified by His grace...through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus .. to be received by faith

Romans 4 Abraham ...GREW STRONG IN HIS FAITH AS HE GAVE GLORY TO GOD (ongoing relationship) fully CONVINCED (in his mind) that God was able to do what He promised that is why his faith was counted to him as righteousness...the words "it was counted" were not written for his sake alone but for ours also..

James 2 21/3 "Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered Isaac on the altar?

You see that his faith and his actions were working together and his faith was MADE COMPLETE by what he did. And the scripture (Gen 15 6) was fulfilled by what he did (Gen 22) and he was called the friend of God. And the figurative test sacrifice was fulfilled too by Jesus who knew scripture and that scripture must be fulfilled in Him (Luke 22 37)

Jesus said (John 8) to Jews seeking to rely on lineal descent from Abraham-(faith in something God had not said would save them)  
"If you were Abraham's children you would do the things Abraham did"  
What things?

He did what God told him to do.

Obey God's call and instructions rescue people, intercede, build, reconcile, dig wells, refresh, bless, heal, respond to God as a friend, bring up children in the same promises we have received, see scripture fulfilled, complete the task, believe God, worship God.

The church is called to be witnesses as Abraham also was. Is it time to stop telling ourselves quite so often about how much God loves US and tell somebody else how much He loves THEM?

Lord, please help us.

Amen