

June 18, 2017

Faith: The Choice to Believe

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for...therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and protector of our faith..."

Hebrews 11:1-12:2

Every one of the great heroes of faith that the Hebrew author mentions faced what each of us faces at one time or another. For each of these heroes there were moments when they had to choose to put their faith in God even when it didn't always make sense. Abraham is just such a hero of faith.

The Hebrew author writes of Abraham, ***"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...By faith Abraham, even though he was past the age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise...By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promise was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring shall be reckoned."*** (Hebrews 11:8-19)

Throughout his life Abraham was faced with the choice to put his faith in God or not to. Sometimes Abraham failed to choose God and those wrong choices cost him, but over and over again, Abraham chose to be faithful, to put his trust in God, and God blessed his obedience.

At the beginning of Abraham's story he is living with his father Terah, his wife Sarah, and his nephew Lot in a city called Haran. God came to Abraham there and called him, ***"Leave your country, your people, and your father's household and go to the land that I will show you. 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. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you...to your offspring I will give this land."*** (Genesis 12:1-7)

Abraham chose to believe God and so he followed him, even though he hedged a little. Once God had brought Abraham and his family to Canaan they lived there as Bedouins never owning any of the land except for their burial cave. Abraham's name did become great and he is considered the Father of the faithful for three major religions. God certainly blessed Abraham richly during his lifetime, and through this faithful man you and I received Jesus.

When God promised Abraham that he would have a son with Sarah, he struggled to believe that such a promise could come true. At nearly one hundred years of age when Sarah was ninety they had a child



of promised named Isaac. And when Isaac was in his teens God came to Abraham again and challenged him to offer his son as a sacrifice. As the Hebrew author tells us this son was the child of God's promises to Abraham and yet the old Patriarch chose obedience and prepared to offer his child as a burnt offering. Of course, God intervened and fulfilled Abraham's words, ***"God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering..."***

Over and over again through the long years of his life Abraham was faced with the choice to put his trust in God or not to. Like all of us there were times when Abraham chose to put his trust in himself, and there were times when he chose to put his trust in God. When Abraham failed to choose faith in God, God was still faithful to him.

Hebrews 11:12 says of God's heroes of faith, ***"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...they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called there God..."***