

In Genesis 12:1-5 we have the significant narrative of the life of Abraham. God's plan was to bless and redeem the world through a chosen people. When God said, *"And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed,"* He had in mind the coming of Christ, the seed of Abraham as concerning the flesh. We see this promised being fulfilled during the 1st century. Paul would write of such in Galatians 3. ***Galatians 3:16*** *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.* Of Abraham came the Jews, and through the Jews came the Law and the prophets, and through them they came Christ and His church. Jesus said to the Jews of His day, *"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad"* (John 8:56) Abraham understood that he was the originator of the Messiah and the father of a great multitude of believers.

Galatians 3:8 *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.* It seems that Abraham knew long ago that there would be a place where he and his innumerable family of believers would be heirs according to the promise and would dwell forever. ***Galatians 3:29*** *And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* Let us understand that the spiritual Israel is no longer the nation of Israel but rather the church, i.e. Christians.

But Abraham means more to us than simply the father of the redeemed. The great life of Abraham occupies more space in the Old Testament record than any other personal narrative. Abraham was a great man of God and because of who he was, it would do us good to study some characteristics of his life. For the next few minutes, let us now journey through the life of Abraham and notice some of the great lessons we learn from his life.

A. ABRAHAM POSSESSED GREAT FAITH IN GOD

Because of the wide misunderstanding of faith in our world today we must ask the question, “What is faith?” Hebrews 11:1 defines for us Biblical faith. ***Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*** Therefore, faith is the ability to foresee and believe the unseen. Many of you have faith that there is a Niagara Falls. You’ve never seen it, but there is enough evidence to convince you that it exists. But it’s not faith to me. I’ve been there and seen it; so to me it is knowledge, not faith. Faith is believing in something you have not seen. This great truth is set forth in ***2 Corinthians 4:16-18 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. (17) For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; (18) While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*** Faith allows us to look beyond the temporal. We have never personally seen God, yet we know He exists. Faith is based on evidence or testimony. ***Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*** Faith is not a blind leap in the dark.

Romans 4:12 tells us that we should “...walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham.” It took great faith for Abraham to believe that he and Sarah would have a son in their advanced age. Abraham looked beyond human circumstances. If God said it, Abraham believed it.

It took great faith to obey God concerning the offering of his son Isaac (Genesis 22), but Abraham’s faith stood the test. Our faith today will be tested and the question is how will you stand? Many allow their faith to fail when tested. Let us learn to possess great faith like Abraham

B. ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED BY WORKS

James 1:21-22 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

(22) *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.* Faith and obedience go together. You cannot have one without the other. The belief that salvation comes by faith alone is an erroneous doctrine ... note carefully ***James 2:24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*** This is the only time that the words “faith only” occur in the Bible and it is in the negative.

It was not just Abraham’s belief in God that made him acceptable, but it was his obedience that made him justified in the sight of God. ***Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed;*** Abraham’s faith motivated him to obey regardless of the cost. For example ... the offering of Isaac. He was instructed to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice on the altar and his faith demonstrated his willingness to obey that instruction. Let us understand that many times there is a cost to be paid with obedience

C. ABRAHAM WAS A FRIEND OF GOD

Three times he called this in scripture. (2 Chronicles 20:7, Isaiah 41:8, James 2:23) To be a friend of God one must do His will. ***John 15:14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*** Surely no one would want to be an enemy of God. Let us understand that you can be an enemy of God. ***James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*** It’s a dangerous thing to be an enemy of God. While God is a loving and compassionate God, he is also a vengeful God. ***Hebrews 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*** Abraham was a friend and obeyed God’s commands

D. ABRAHAM WAS IN PROPER CONTROL OF HIS FAMILY

This is a point that is often overlooked when we look at the life of Abraham. We see him being highly complemented by God in Genesis 18:19. As the Lord and two angels visited the home of Abraham they said, ***Genesis 18:19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD,*** Abraham commanded his children to keep the law of God and this pleased God.

Notice the text says, “He commanded his children.” We should not give our children a choice – obedience needs be demanded. We command our children to go to school, the doctor, etc. Abraham wonderfully reinforced his commands to his family by his exemplary life. ***Deuteronomy 11:18-21 Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.*** They stored the word of God in their hearts, they wrote it down and kept it in front of their eyes. ***(19) And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*** They taught it to their children. In fact it sounds like they drilled in into their hearts day and night. ***(20) And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: (21) That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.*** Children need to learn that religion must be a way of life; it’s not something that we just do on Sunday

E. ABRAHAM WAS VERY GENEROUS

In Genesis 13:8-9 we have one of the favorite stories about Abraham. It’s when he and his nephew Lot were overlooking the land and was to decide how to divide it. By all rights, Abraham should have had the first choice. After all, he was called of God, not Lot. He was older which rendered him respect and thus the first choice. But, he gave up his rights for the sake of peace. He let Lot choose and he

would take what was left. Lot chose the rich fertile region in the Jordan valley while Abraham took the mountain range.

This same attitude needs to prevail in the church today. Paul had this attitude. ***1 Corinthians 9:19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.*** He would later write to the Christians in Philippi and say, ***Philippians 2:3-5 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. (4) Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. (5) Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*** While we strive to live in peace, we must remember never to compromise the truth for the sake of peace. We should compromise only in the areas of opinion.

F. ABRAHAM REFUSED TO BECOME ENTANGLED IN WORLD AFFAIRS.

In Gen 14 we have the event when Lot was captured from his new home in Sodom; Abraham and his company went and defeated the abductors and rescued Lot. After achieving a victory, he was not interested in the spoils like most victors would have been. He was interested in only one thing, and that was the rescue of Lot.

Abraham was determined not to be under obligation to the enemies of God. He was careful not to be put in a position of compromise. This would give cause for stumbling. He would not be allies with those who he should not associate. We would do well today to learn that same lesson. We need to stay away from worldly and sinful affairs. ***2 John 1:9-11 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*** Those that stray away from the doctrine of Christ do not have God and do so without His blessings. But let's not skip over vs 10-11 to see our responsibility toward such. ***(10) If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: (11) For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*** If we endorse or support

false doctrine, then we are seen by God as partakers. We must not be entangled in the cares of the world.

G. FROM ABRAHAM WE LEARN THAT EVEN GREAT MEN SIN.

Abraham was one of the greatest men that ever lived, and yet we have two accounts of him lying (Pharaoh – Genesis 12; Abimelech – Genesis 20). The Bible paints the pictures of its characters warts and all. Even the faithful can stumble ... Romans 3:23. Abraham stumbled, but was forgiven ... he was the friend of God. This should be of great encouragement to us. Being a Christian does not mean that we are perfect – simply forgiven.

We need to emulate and gain encouragement from Abraham.

Invitation: Do you need forgiveness? Have you obeyed the gospel?