

30 Aug 2009

Abraham - a man of great faith

Gen 11 – 25

Rom 4

Heb 11

Abraham – A man of great faith

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Props: Abraham's cloths and stage makeup

Staff

Chair to sit in

Script as a guideline

Glasses to read with

Music stand for script

White handkerchief

*Chair and music stand are on the stage (or down front ready for Abraham). He enters offstage slowly – he is an old man by now – and he takes his time to get towards the chair. He doesn't sit down but begins by introducing himself.*

Good morning. My name is Abraham. My dear friend, Dana, asked me to come and tell you a little about myself and my life, because she believes that I am a man of great faith. (chuckles). Well, I've had my moments, but I never doubted that God would do what He promised me. But -- I'm getting a bit ahead of myself.

(approaches music stand with script). I've a few notes to read – my memory and my eyesight (holds up glasses) are not what they used to be. Let me begin from the beginning.

I am one of three sons and my father's name is Terah. I was born with the name of Abram in the city of Ur, in the country that is now called Iraq. I married a beautiful woman named Sara. After leaving Ur, Sarah and I settled in Haran.

One day, when I was the ripe old age of 75, the Lord spoke to me. He told me to leave Haran and to go to a land that he would show me. He promised several things that day. I will never forget it that day! He said 'I will make you into a great nation and bless you.' I wasn't quite sure about that promise. Now, don't get me wrong, I trusted in the Lord and knew He was a man of his word, but I was an old man and Sara was barren and could not have children. But the promises didn't stop there. He said that I was going to be famous, that he would bless me, and that everyone on earth would be blessed through me.

Well, you can imagine how I felt. I was a bit in shock. Who was I but the son of Terah? God was going to bless everyone on earth through me? I didn't have any children but God promised to make a nation from my offspring? To be honest, I didn't know what to think. But I convinced Sara to leave Haran and we travelled through Palestine, Canaan, and Israel. We finally went into Egypt because of famine.

Now I told you that Sara was beautiful? And I told you earlier that I am a man of faith, but there were times when I was less than faithful. Well, when we went to Egypt, I knew that the Pharaoh would want to have Sara for his own. I was afraid he would kill me for her, so I lied and said she was my sister. Pharaoh didn't know she was my wife, so he took her to be one of his concubines. In exchange for Sara, I got many livestock and servants and camels. But -- the Lord was not happy at all and he sent serious diseases on the Pharaoh for sleeping with my wife. I believe God did this to protect Sara and to fulfil his promise of blessing people through my family. But, Pharaoh and his house suffered because of my fears and lies. Innocent people suffered because I didn't trust the Lord. Pharaoh was very angry – and I don't really blame him. I felt ashamed and embarrassed. God wanted me to trust him and do what was right, even when the consequences looked unfavourable. I did this same thing again when I was in Gerar and I told King Abimelech that Sara was my sister. You'd think I'd of learned the first time around! Of course King Abimelech was ready to kill me. Good thing he hadn't touched her yet. God spared him harsh punishment in the end.

When Sara and I left Egypt, I was a very wealthy man. I possessed lots of livestock, silver, gold, servants and camels. However, the land where we lived was getting crowded. We settled in the land of Canaan, in Hebron, at city of the West Bank south-southwest of Jerusalem. There I built an altar to the Lord.

Life went on as it does, but I began to despair. Sara and I had no children. I worried that a servant of mine was going to inherit my wealth. Imagine – God promises me children but all I could see was that I was going to have to adopt a manservant to carry on after me! What was God thinking when he made those promises to me? He and I had a long talk about this and you know what he said? ‘A manservant will not be your heir. Your son will be your heir. Furthermore, your offspring will be numerous like the stars.’ I finally got the message. I said, “OK Lord, I believe. I believe that my son will be my heir, that you will bless all the families of the world through me and that I will have many offspring. I don’t see how you’re going to do it, but I know you keep your promises.’ I risked my life, my security, my reputation, my future, and eventually even my son, Isaac, because I trusted the Lord to fulfil his promises.

Many things occurred in my life after that. I made a few mistakes. I let Sara convince me to sleep with Hagar because Sara didn’t see how God was going to give her a child. Sara thought she’d help the Lord because it was ‘obvious’ to her that since she was still barren, he needed her help. I eventually sent Hagar and my son, Ishmael, away. I was 86 years old when Ishmael, my son, my only son at the time, was born and it broke my heart to see them leave.

Years passed – Then, when I was 99 years old, the Lord came to me and once again, confirmed the promise he made to me 24 years ago– that I would be the father of many nations. He even gave me a new name – Abraham.

You see, Abram means 'exalted father' but Abraham means 'father of many'. My Father in Heaven gave me a new name so that I would never doubt or forget his promises for my life. I started to laugh and laugh. How was God going to give me a son, at the ripe old age of 99, from my wife Sara, who was a dried up old prune at the age of 90??? It seemed impossible, but God assured me that he would do what he said he would do.

Well - God gave us a son, Isaac, which means 'he laughs'. I often wonder about that name. Does that mean that Isaac laughs or that our Lord has the last laugh??? I do know He has a sense of humor, giving this old man such a beautiful child. Then what did the Lord turn around and do? HE TESTED ME!! He tested my faith in him. To test my loyalty and allegiance to the Lord, He asked me to go and take Isaac, my beautiful boy, and sacrifice him on an altar. Well, you can imagine how I felt. God had promised to make me a father of many, yet it appeared that my only heir was going to die. I didn't know what He was up to. I thought maybe He would provide a substitute lamb at the last minute or at raise the boy from the dead (Heb 11:19), but I was not sure of what was going to happen. But I did as he asked. I took my boy up in the mountains near Moriah and took the knife to kill him. As I was bringing the knife down onto Isaac, an angel called out and told me to stop. The Lord was pleased that I had not withheld my only son and promised me, again, that through my offspring, all nations on earth will be blessed. That, for me, as the most difficult test of all. (tears in eyes – wipe eyes with handkerchief)

Sara died when she was 127 years old. Isaac married Rebekah and I married a woman named Keturah. She bore me 6 more sons, but I left everything I had to Isaac. When I die, I want to be buried with Sara. Isaac promised me he would do that.

So, this was my life. But let me tell you one more thing. Against all hope, I came to believe the promises of God and thus I became the father of many nations, just as the Lord had said. Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. I did not have a right and whole relationship with Lord because I was a good person or because I did all the right things that a good and honest person should do. No. I was made right with God because I believe that God is who He says He is and that He will do what He promises He will do. Although I was perplexed and upset at some of the things God did in my life, I was strengthened in my faith and gave glory to God, I was fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised. So, remember - - ask the Lord to give you more faith and perseverance to get through the hard times, the perplexing times, the sorrowful times, the dry and barren times, the fertile and plentiful times - - - because God has the power to do what He has promised.

Goodbye

(walk off – slowly & bent over)