

Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 27th November 2022 10 am

True belief - God's covenant with Abram

Welcome to all.

Opening Scripture

Hymn MP 481 name of all majesty

Scripture Psalm 145 (page 631)

Prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

Children's talk Spider box.

Chorus MP 31 Amazing Grace

Notices Members Mtg today

Prayer time

Reading Genesis 15:1-21 (page 15)

Rom 4:16-25 (page 1131), (see also Gal 2/3)

Hymn MP 645 The God of Abraham praise

Sermon True belief

Hymn MP 1358 There is a hope that burns within my heart

Closing Prayer

Close

Prayer & Exordium

- One Christmas Eve Philip Bliss was doing some shopping with his wife in the streets of Peoria (Illinois), and noticed a little half-starved girl, dressed in rags, looking into a window full of attractive toys. He stopped and said kindly, " Now, just pick out the one you want and you shall have it. I will go in and buy it for you." And he meant it, for nothing pleased him so much as to make a child happy. But the girl gave him a look of shy distrust, and, gathering her thin shawl round her, ran away.

You act on what you believe. What you do is based on what you believe.

The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside!" or, "I will be murdered in the streets!" It's a false belief – there's no lion of course. Proverbs 22:13 & 26:13

1. Do you not read you Bible because you are not really sure that God is there, or if he is you don't think He will speak to you?
2. Do you not see the need to either seek the Lord or bring him worship?
3. IS there no motivation to serve Him. *Your actions betray your belief*
4. Will you not forgive someone? Why not? Is it because you don't know the Lord's mercy to you?
5. Have you not given money because you don't think you will have enough to cover your needs if you do? *Yes actions betray belief*
6. Do you not pray because you doubt it will make a difference.

All these show unbelief, all these are symptoms of a lack of faith in God. x2
And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6

- Maybe you're looking enviously to the faith of others, someone in your family, a brother or sister, a parent, grandparent 'they trust the Lord for their life, I wish I had that' Or do you look around the room here, and think I wish I had a faith like yours? I don't have it.'

Today we are looking at a man of faith. Abraham is the example of how to live by faith. He is the man of faith. Not saying he was perfect for his mistakes are recorded here for all to see, yet he is described as a man who pleased God – he pleased Him because he trusted Him. x2

There's the main thing to learn this morning - you can trust God - and should trust God. x2

God had called Abram to leave everything, to forsake all, and follow him. He promised to lead him and to take him to the promised land. Gen 12.

These promises the Lord had made where to be fulfilled through an heir, a son, - a son Abram did not have Gen 13:7.

In Gen 15 we see an exchange between Abram and the Lord. Abram is questioning and believing, - not question and doubting, - although it is easy to read the passage this way. No he does believe but is asking God how?

God shows by a sign that he is able to do what he has promised. "Trust me, you can trust me – and I will help you in this by giving you a sign". *Today.*

To see this we begin with an impossible situation. Are you in one right now? Does it feel like it? If you belong to the Lord he will bring you there – so that you will see him there. He will bring you in there – to bring you out again.

Before that a little context. Gen 15 starts with 'After this' in other words it's linked with Gen 14. There Abram had stepped out in faith and took on those four powerful kings to rescue his nephew Lot. As in a [Mission Impossible](#) film there had been a 'successful extraction', both for Lot and for others.

Abraham has had his feet muddied with the world and he now thinks these kings will surely be after vengeance, he feared a counter-attack.

Then **the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision** and comforts by saying "**Do not be afraid, Abram.** x2.

Abram had been honourable in his victory and not taken a penny from the wealth offered by the king of Sodom. To which God said to him **I am your shield, your very great reward.**" The Lord will honour every move you make that displays your trust in Him. Do not seek recompense from the world. ^^

So to our impossible situation

There has to be a son. God's word has said so – but there is no son – nor can there be. Faced with this Abram says 2. "**O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" ... "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."**

In Gen 12:7 the Lord had spoken of a promise of a seed.

In Gen 13:15 The Lord had spoken of the promise of a seed. And in v16

Yet he remains childless - and his wife is too old to have a child.

Abraham is saying "I have no child." Literally *I go*, or "*I am going, childless*, going into years, I am going out of the world, going the way of all the earth. *I die childless*," "I leave the world, and leave no child behind me."

2a

It is easy to see this passage as a complaint, I don't think it is, many in that situation do complain: "I don't like being childless, give me a child, it's not fair etc. etc."

May I suggest actually something quite different. - Abram is not thinking of himself but how this will impact on God's glory and reputation. Abram knows the Lord has great plans to bless the whole world. He says: "Lord if the heir is to be only a servant this will bring disgrace upon this promised seed. There has to be a child, an heir – but how can all this be? – with no child? This child is to be the trigger for the flood of blessing to come.

- Like the catch that holds back the balloons etc, the trap that releases the horses in a race.

But there is no child. It is my servant that will inherit the estate, - not the name - not the status - not the blessings - just the possessions!

- ✚ What is better an heir with no estate? – or an estate with no heir?

That's the starting point – the impossible situation. I know you don't like being there. You always make sure you have it sorted. If so then don't expect the Lord to do anything. I know you don't like being in the desert - for in the desert you are stuck - you have to learn trust Him for all you need.

I remember at 15 as a cadet going on an army camp. Everything is out of your control, you have to rely on the food being there and you eat what is there, you eat what you are given. You sleep on what is there, no comforts, the clothing the uniform is provided, that's it.

- ✚ The well know phrase "Man's extremity - is God's opportunity" is true.
- ✚ The Lord promises you that if you who entrust your life to him, you will not be ashamed, he will provide for you, all you need, he will do it.

Abram knows everything comes from the Lord. he believes '**with the promises so the provision**'. He is calling on the Lord to enact his promises. Let us if a promise is delayed not act in unbelief, don't in your impatience think it won't happen – if the Lord says it will - then it will.

Promise

The Lord said 4 "**This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.**" He took him outside and said, "**Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.**" Then he said to him, "**So shall your offspring be.** Wow, God makes great promises!

He will do what he has promised - It doesn't mean he will sort out my messed up finances, or messed up relationships, or messed up health.

2b

But if it is in here (Bible) – he will do it. Abram immediately has the Lord’s answer, no, not Eliezer, - your child. **From your own body- will be your heir.**

Look up to the stars and count them, how many Abram? he looks up as the dawn slowly breaks on this new day. 8 Octillion Abram + or - one or two.

So shall your offspring be. The Lord will do over and above all of our expectations – He always does, he is the God of ‘exceedingly more’.

Isa 51:2 **look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was but one, and I blessed him and made him many.**

There was no hesitancy with the Lord and there is no hesitancy with Abram. 6 **Abram believed the LORD** “I believe you” x2 was Abram’s heart. *And you?* We are not hearing what Abram said, we are looking into this man’s heart.

When I listen to you I am really thinking where is this person’s heart, words are easy, is there true trust in the Lord, a love for him, a confidence in Him?

Do your lips say “Lord I believe you, I trust you” – Oh may that phrase express the truthfulness of our hearts. Is there someone here: You sing the songs and say ‘Amen’ to the prayers, but where is that desire to trust entrust your life to Christ? Or is your life kept guardedly - under your own control’?

Abram believed - 6 Abram believed the LORD, KEY

Hebrews 11 says “ **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. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.**” Hebrews 11:11-12

Abram is the man of faith, the example of faith, the father of all the faithful. If you have true faith in the Lord you too are sons of God (the son being the heir) through Christ. **Father Abraham had many sons** song

Jesus said to the tax collector Zacchaeus when he repented “**Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.**” Luke 19:9 – **Understand, then, Paul says to the Galatian church, that those who believe are children of Abraham.** Galatians 3:7, Rom 4:16. children of faith.

And anyone who has faith knows and can speak of how it came to be that way. In verse 7 **The Lord also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."**

✚ The Lord is saying “can you not see - my hand over your life?”

Can you say what the Lord has done to you, for you, in you? The Lord had brought Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees, *out of the fire of the Chaldees*, for the Chaldeans worshipped the fire. Have you left today’s idols of self, pride and turned to the Lord. Has he taken you out – away – and to a new place??

If not the Lord invites you “Leave were you are - and I will take you to the promised land” **the land of the living** The land’s a picture of eternal security.

God gives a sign that it will happen

8 **But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I shall gain possession of it?"**

Abram has already been commended for his faith, this is not “it won’t happen” **but how** x2 **can I know** not the disbelief of God’s word as with Zacharias to whom the angel said: **"you will be silent and not able to speak ... because you did not believe my words"** Luke 1:18-20

No, this is for the strengthening and confirming of his faith. He believed, but he desired a sign to be treasured up against the hour of temptation. God gives you experiences of his grace to go to for the time of testing, that you will be ready when difficulty comes.

Remember Gideon and his fleece? It was not that he would know what God wanted him to do – he knew that already - often wrongly used for guidance – but to strengthen him for the hard task ahead a sign **then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.**" And that is what happened. Judges 6:36-40

So too when God promised to heal King Hezekiah. **Isaiah answered, "This is the LORD's sign to you that the LORD will do what he has promised: the shadow will go back ten steps."** 2 Kings 20:8-10

Then in the time of Isaiah God says to King Ahaz "Ask the LORD your God for a sign," ... **the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.**" Isaiah 7:11,14

The sign for Abram - The covenant

So what will the sign be for Abram? Not wonders from heaven – as you and I wish for – but a sacrifice. (God’s covenants with man are made by sacrifice. Ps 50:5)

The Lord directs Abram to go and make preparations. 9 **"Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."** Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two (except the birds) and arranged the halves opposite each other;

Here is the ancient contract. It sounds so strange to us who are used to a contract drawn up by lawyers “sign and witness here”. The animals were killed and cut in two. Break this contract and you too will be cut in too, the ultimate death! We see this in Jeremiah.

The men who have violated my covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces. The leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the court officials, the priests and all the people of the land who walked between the pieces of the calf, - both parties walked through together - I will hand over to their enemies who seek their lives. Their dead bodies will become food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth. Jeremiah 34:18-20

Abram obeys, he did what he was told to do. Then he waits and he waits, so much so that indeed **11 The birds of prey came down on the carcasses, - and Abram had to drive them away.**

12 As the sun was setting, i.e at the time of the evening sacrifice, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

Abram is so fast asleep he could never, ever have any part in it – no this is going to be God’s doing, His alone. This is so you can be sure **13 “Know for certain x2 the LORD said to him, God will do it.**

So 17 When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking brazier with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.

?? **Smoking brazier** = smoke a sign of his presence and a **blazing torch** = a fire to burn and consume the offerings, to confirm God’s acceptance of it.

That is how a sacrifice was accepted, it was taken up by fire. Lev 9. With Manoah and his son Samson Jud 13:20; **the flame blazed up from the altar towards heaven.** So too with Elijah on Mt Carmel **Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice,** 1 Kings 18:38, and again with King David where **the Lord answered with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering** 1 Chr 21:26

Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice was accepted, not being consumed with fire but through his resurrection. With Jesus we are told: **He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.** Rom 4:25

This is the glory of the gospel of Hope.

We have been talking about belief this morning. Let me say clearly, unbelief is sin. It is sin because God has given you every reason to believe in Him through what he has created. To not believe is not lack of evidence but a

moral choice. The unbeliever’s wicked heart suppresses the truth of God. That is sin.

Yet God in His mercy he has made a way the repentant sinner can be forgiven. God has done this in Jesus Christ. He was delivered to death - **for sin.** My sin. And the sin of many. How about you? for your sin? What has happened to it? Do you still have it? Or has he taken it away? nailing it to the cross. If he hasn’t then you still have it – run to him now and plead with him to remove this guilt, this burden, this blight that will one day cause you to be cast into Hell – with no escape. Be like Abram believe Him, trust Him.

Don’t be like the blind man in his unbelief staggering towards the edge of the chasm, he doesn’t see it – he loses his stick but it is too far down to clatter. He is soon to tumble into the furnace of eternal suffering.

6 Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

quoted in James 2:23, Quoted in Rom 4:2, Quoted in Gal 3:6

In Christ – all has been done – trust in Him and you will be considered righteousness in the sight of God. **His great gift - for your great need! x2**

Abram had his sign **18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land,** Gen 15:18 **not I will** give but it’s done. What God has promised is as sure as if it were already done. It is said, **“ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life,”** John 3:36

Eternal life is the immediate gift - everyone who believes HAS eternal life there and then, that moment. - Here and now - any man or woman will as surely go to heaven as if he were there already! (see Rom 8) **but** beware - **whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”** Have you trusted Him? If not **How can you escape if you ignore such a great salvation** Heb 2:1,2

Remember the poor girl who did not trust, did not believe and so missed out – failed to receive the great treasure, what a tragedy. A tragedy for that is just the way sinners treat Christ. The man who wanted to help said: “I was really grieved that she distrusted me when I just wished with all my heart to make her happy. I think I understand a little better how the Lord feels at our unbelief of His precious promises.” Great Evangelists Jesse Page FRGS, (Page 133)

We asked earlier was it an estate without an heir, or an heir without an estate? God gave both to Abram. Today God gives both Christ the heir and heaven the estate, the land the two invaluable blessings, Christ and heaven; Abram eyed them from a distance. You and I can be doubly sure now.

END full quotes in extra section below