

What Does Faith Do?

The faith of the *father of the faithful*...

- Hb.11:8-19 – Abraham admonishes readers
- Abraham's chronology –
 - Age 75: left home in Ur of Chaldees forever
 - Age 86: Ishmael born
 - Age 100: Isaac born
 - Age 137: Sarah died
 - Age 160: Jacob born
 - Age 175: Abraham died

I. Go, 8

Abraham obeyed, 8

1. Gn.12:1 (by faith, Hb.5:9)

- God called; gave Abraham no reason or directions
- Abraham did not know where he was going. How would he know when he arrived?
An unseen destination requires faith
- Doing what God said without worry over consequences requires strong faith

I. Go, 8

II. Stay, 9-10

Abraham sojourned: by faith. Gn.12:6

9: he inhabited the place as foreigner; *be a stranger*

- Ur: center of learning, wealth, luxury
- Abraham left Ur for tents among strangers... no house, electricity, water...
- Gn.23:4, dress, language, manners, religion, morality...reveal strangers
- Abraham never fit in; never at home in 'promised land'

10: did not look for permanent city in Canaan...

I. Go, 8

II. Stay, 9-10

III. Wait, 11-12

Twenty-five year wait for son

11: Sarah: barren; aged. Gn.16; 18:9-15 (21:6)

– Once she realized the promise was God's,
her doubt vanished

12: Abraham: *as good as dead*

– Ro.4:19-21

- Main focus: faith of Abraham: waited for the city . . . of God (13-16)

Abraham waits...

13: he had descendants as numerous as stars / sand (12): not even death made Abraham doubt God's promise

- These all died in faith. Jn.8:56
- The moment of decision and time of fulfillment are most exciting
 - The time in between is when most lose hope and quit
 - Their faith stood test of time and death. 10:36
- Strangers / pilgrims... (temporary residents)

Abraham waits...

13: descendants

14: seek homeland (not earth)

15: could have returned to Ur...

16: desire heavenly country (v.10; Ph.3:20)

I. Go, 8

II. Stay, 9-10

III. Wait, 11-12

IV. Obey, 17-19

- Abraham to kill his son – Gn.22
 - Too old to have another child
 - Command contradicts promise
 - Faith believed blessing will come even if Isaac is slain
 - Abraham is the real sacrifice. Gave God his best; willing to sacrifice dearest object in loyalty to God
 - Required greatest conviction, costliest surrender, highest fear. Gn.22:12
 - Ro.4:19, Isaac's birth from one as good as dead; now Isaac's life...

Abraham's consistent obedience began with
God's command to leave Ur...

- Not knowing where he was going
- Believing in promise of a son at an impossible age
- Killing son of promise...

Abraham's consistent obedience began with God's command to leave Ur...

1. Separation, Gn.12
2. Famine, Gn.12
3. Wealth, Gn.13
4. Strife, Gn.13
5. Power, Gn.14
6. Concern, Gn.14
7. Thanksgiving, Gn.14

Abraham's consistent obedience began with
God's command to leave Ur...

8. Trust, Gn.15

9. Delayed fulfillment, Gn.15

10. Waiting, Gn.16

11. Ignorance, Gn.17

12. Hospitality, Gn.18

13. Salvation, Gn.18

14. Isaac, Gn.22

Isaac – Hb.11:17-19, the hardest journey

- Three day journey . . . to kill promised son
- ‘The things of God seemed to fight against the things of God, and faith fought with faith, and the command fought with the promise.’
- Hb.11:18, in Isaac your seed shall be called...
- Abraham’s faith (11:19): God who miraculously gives a son can just as easily raise him from the dead

God gave a son to two people as good as dead

- Ro.4:19

Isaac – Gn.22:5, the hardest journey

- If Abraham **and Isaac** do not return, then Isaac cannot not be the son of promise
- Cf. Gn.21:12
- Hb.11, two verbs –
 - 17: By faith Abraham, when he was tested, **offered up** Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son...

Perfect tense: expresses permanent result of Abraham's offering in will – **in his mind the deed was done** – in purpose and intent, Isaac was dead

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Imperfect tense: his actual readiness in preparing the sacrifice which was not literally carried into effect – in fact [**No questions, no debate, no stalling.**]

Isaac – Gn.22:5, the hardest journey

- Abraham would give back to God what was most precious to him.
- “It was as though Isaac really had died and had been raised to life again” – Hughes
- Ja.2:21, Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar

Conclusion

- In greatest trial, Abraham trusts and obeys.
- Gn.22:12, He said, Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me

The rest of the story

Abraham was a man...with faults and blemishes

1. He was subject to repeated deceptions that endangered Sarah's virtue. Gn.12:10-20
[20:11-13]
 - Why? Worried about his own security
2. He allowed Sarah to influence him to walk by sight, not by faith
 - He fathered a child with her maid, Hagar...
 - When Sarah acted jealously, he let her drive Hagar out of the house, Gn.16

So what?

1. God, in His wisdom, worked with this very imperfect man until he developed strong faith that fulfilled God's purpose in the divine plan
 - Abraham became a new man
2. All of us see falls and failures in our past; may assume we are worthless in His plan for our life
 - The good news: like Abraham, we can continue to trust and obey God, and thus become the people He wants us to be.
 - He can use me . . . He can use you