

Abraham, the Friend of God
Heb. 11:8-19

Intro: When Isaiah was ministering to Judah, he was led by the Lord to approach the people in many different ways -- that their ^{hearts} might be turned back to the Lord. One of the measures that God used at that time was Abraham. Cf. Isa. 51:1-3.

What a honor was thus conferred upon the great patriarch!

And think of how this is done again and again in the Scriptures -- by the Psalmists, by our Lord, by Paul, by James -- just to name a few.

Now -- as far as we are concerned, the point is this: If Abraham has been used as an encouragement to the people of God in the past, then we should expect that the Lord intends Abraham to be the same to us.

The writer of Hebrews has singled out four things about the life of Abraham which together help us to see why Abraham has been called in Holy Scripture, "the friend of God." See 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; Jas. 2:23.

What are they?

I. THE FIRST STEP (Heb. 11:8).

This takes us back to Gen. 12:1-9 and reminds us that Abraham really did not have a great deal to go on historically (at least from what has been revealed -- just Abel and Enoch and Noah, as Heb. 11 would also indicate).

Abraham had just two things:

- 1) The Lord, and
- 2) His Word.

As Isa. 51 indicates, all that was to happen in Abraham's life was initiated and carried out by God. Abraham does not even get credit for the faith. It was true then as it is now -- Rom. 10:17.

But the important thing is that Abraham, in spite of all of the difficulties, took that first step of faith that was to open the door to endless blessings!

II. THE LONG WALK (Heb. 11:9, 10).

This might be called, THE LONG WAIT, but it was really a WALK which involved years of waiting! It is brought out by the words in Heb. 11:9, "he sojourned," i.e., he stayed.

Note the idea in v. 15. Contrast with John 6:66.

Abraham waited, not always perfectly (as the Genesis record indicates), for over 25 years -- until it was humanly impossible for him and Sarah to have a child.

And the one thing that stands out in the Genesis record is that all of this time the Lord was making Himself known in greater and greater ways to Abraham -- up to and including Abraham's 99th year, one year before Isaac was born. See Gen. 17.

This explains the reason for our waiting, and shows how the Lord sustains us during the waiting time, as well as why He makes us wait.

III. THE MIRACULOUS BIRTH (Heb. 11:11, 12).

This shows us that the Lord was working Sarah's heart, too.

But see Rom. 4:17-21.

We do not know of any instance in Scripture where this had ever happened before! But that made no difference. The Lord had been working in the hearts of both Abraham and Sarah so that they were going to believe God in spite of the circumstances -- because they were depending upon His promise.

And Isaac was born -- thus opening the door for the fulfillment of all of God's promises.

IV. THE GREATEST TEST (Heb. 11:17-19).

When you get to Genesis 22, don't you have trouble reading what is there? Can you believe that the Lord is really asking Abraham to do such a thing?

But He is! WHY? Is He going back on all that He has been Abraham throughout his life? How are we to explain this?

A word to those of you who are older tonight: Has the Lord ever brought you to the place where everything that you have learned from the Word has been tested so that it seems that you have learned all of the wrong things -- and they are not true after all?

Then note this carefully. What was God doing with Abraham? He was teaching Abraham the greatest lesson of his life of faith -- teaching Him to trust Him when it looked like everything was being contradicted and ruined.

And what do we have?

For the second time in Abraham's life we see his faith strengthened to believe that God could do something that Abraham had never known Him to do before. See v. 19.

How does that great deliverance Psalm, Psalm 34, end? With these words,

" . . . none of them who trust in him shall be desolate."

Concl: What does the Lord want?

He wants us to trust Him. He wants us to believe His Word. He wants us to depend upon the fact that, regardless of the circumstances, He will be faithful. He has never failed. He will not fail. He cannot fail, for He is God!

Let's end where we began tonight -- with Isa. 51:1-3. This is God's message for you and for me!