

1st - Abraham lack of faith

2 message

Do You Lack Faith

Title: How to Believe God

Text: Gen 15:1-17:27

Take your Bibles, please, and open them to the Book of Genesis chapter 15....Genesis chapter 15 and beginning at verse 1 You will find notes in your bulletin. And I hope that you will use them so that you might be more familiar with the message when you leave here. We remember so little of what we hear. So that is why it is very important to participate in either taking notes or some sort of visional aid.

15:1

Read/Gen/15:1+

The title of our message is: HOW TO BELIEVE GOD....This is Palm Sunday. This is the day that Jesus entered Jerusalem in what is known as "the Triumphal Entry"...And you will recall how the people, the great multitudes, came to meet Jesus as he came into the city. And they spread their garments in the road and they cut branches from the trees and spread them in the road. And the multitude cried out saying, "HOSANNA, TO THE SON OF DAVID: BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD."

And it seems that the people were believing in Jesus. But you will remember that it was a show ~~belief~~ belief because a few short days later these same people cried crucify him, crucify him.

So, while on Palm Sunday there seemed to be "belief"...yet in truth it was not. So our subject is very important. HOW TO BELIEVE GOD. And every one of us needs this...For how do we believe God? How do we trust Him? How do we know he is going to do what he claims? And here in Genesis we find a fantastic story dealing with this issue.

God - Told Abraham descended as stars

(Genesis ^{mut} 15:1-6; 16:1-6; 17:1-8; 15-19; 21:1-7)

Let us look to the Lord in a Word of Prayer

(1C) In chapter 15 we have the challenge of Faith. And this challenge of faith involves two things.

(1D) Number one, it is based on God's provision for this man.

And no faith that we have in God is without God's provision. It is beautiful expressed in a phrase in Vs 1..."I am a shield to you."

No reason to fear Abram. This challenge, this test of faith that I am going to give to you is back-up and based upon my provision for you.

In the book of Psalms chapter 5:12 we read: "for it is thou who dost bless the righteous man, O Lord, thou doest surround him with favor as with a shield." God promises favor and blessing as though he were surrounding us with a shield.

Psalms 91:4 says: "He will cover you with his feathers, and under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark."

In Ephesians 6:16 it says, "taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one."

The shield is the Lord, himself....Not our circumstance. Not ~~all~~ of our attempts to provide for our own needs and our own problems, But the shield is the Lord. I AM THY SHIELD ABRAHAM, DON'T WORRY.

You have adequate provision for every need, every test, every trial in myself. I am your shield...

(2D) The second thing that this challenge of faith was based upon was: God's promise. He said ~~it~~ in Verse 1 of chapter 15: I am not only your shield; but I am also your great reward."

And the Lord really spoke to my heart. "Your reward shall be great." I have a tendency to think that at times God is not interested in blessing me.....Especially when trials come into your life.....The Bible says, "fear not, don't lack courage at this great test of faith that I am giving you. Because YOUR REWARD SHALL BE VERY GREAT."

A tremendous promise from God...And notice, again, that the Lord, himself, is the reward. Many times we are looking at what God will give to us as a reward. Rather than looking at God, himself...THE LORD, HIMSELF, IS THAT REWARD.

So, as we look at this tremendous test of faith, and certainly it was it was back-up by God provision....I am your shield...I am your reward.

And I look at the Bible, which is really the greatest book in history, dealing with promises and rewards, and I think of how little we believe God. All the tremendous assurances and promises of what God will do in our lives. And yet, we fail to believe Him. We fail to take him at his word. And to say, "God I am so excited with what you have promised me. And I will believe You, regardless of how long it takes me to see the fulfillment. I know that it is in your plan.

And this is a tremendous lesson. The hardest lesson of faith is to wait upon the Lord. That is the hardest lesson of faith. And that is the lesson God taught Abraham. To wait on the Lord, to wait until God is ready to do what he wants to do.

Most of us are running around trying to solve our own problems, get ourselves out of the jam we are in, either emotionally, spiritually, or physically. And we fail to see that the greatest test of faith is waiting on God....Not demanding that God answer today. But waiting upon the Lord in complete confidence that this sovereign God knows best in my life. And that He is my shield, He is my great reward.....

15:6
Abraham

(2C) Now, the cause behind Abraham's lack of faith falls into three areas. And I think if you or I were Abraham we would not have been any different. There were three things which cause Him to lack faith.

God tested Abraham and said: "Look Abraham I am going to give you as many people as the sand of the sea and the stars in the sky." And Abraham took one quick look at his family and said: "this is impossible."

God, in His Word, promises us tremendous things and we take a look at our lives and we say: "Well, it hasn't happened, yet." "So, how do I know it is going to happen in the future."?

There were three things which really hindered Abraham from putting his complete faith in God concerning this promise: That is, that he would have a son and all his descendants would number like to sands of the sea and the stars of the sky.

15:6
... ..

(1D) Number one, it was the absence of children . Chapter 16:1 "Now, Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children." *He had no kids*

and Some have expressed that as being the ~~the~~ saddest words of the Bible, like the sorrow before the joy of the morrowing. No Children...bearen... And you say, "How in the world can God answer that?....."

And if you or I were in the shoes of Abraham and we had no children, we too might have said: "Lord, how in the world are you going to fulfill your promise when I haven't got any kids?"

(2D) The second thing, is the ability to produce was not even there in ~~the~~ Sarai. She was bearen... Chapter 16:2 says "Now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children." And this became a great ~~big~~ wall in the life of Abarham in believing God. His wifes body was dead. She could not produce. And he looked at this situation and said: "how in the world can God do what he said he will do?"

and And I thought about those who are not Christians. The Bible speaks of the unbeliever as being spiritual dead. ^{Ep 2:1} Just as dead as the worm of Sarai. And you may say, "How in the world can I experience spiritual life? How can I be changed by the power of God?Well, it is because of faith in God. Not faith in man. Not in our attempt to change ourselves or to try and reform over night... It is by the power of God. Believing, that God can do it, and I cannot. And the moment you believe that Christ can save you. And it is christ alone. Not Christ and my help. But christ alone. And the moment you believe that, the Bible says you are brought to life spiritually. As dead as you might have been. You come to life. WHY? Because your faith is in christ.

But you know, we Christians experience the same problem. We don't see much joy and fuitfulness in our life and our life looks dead. And we say, ^{WHY ISN'T} "Can God do anything ~~else~~?"And again it is related to our faith in God alone. Jesus said in John 15:5: "I am the vine and you are the branches. You that abides in me and I in you, the same bringth forth much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing..."

Oh, that is a hard lesson, isn't it?...I don't know about you. But that is a real hard lesson..NOTHING...ZERO God says.

Now, remember, we are talking about HOW TO BELIEVE GOD....Here you are a believer. You have already come to know Christ. You have received spiritual life. And you are looking at your life and saying: "What can God do with my life?" ^(pitance) ... Well, the important thing at this moment is to recognize that without Him we are zero...What we usually do is we dedicate ourselves to christ in some sort of a way, and we tack on to it all of our efforts to accomplish what we think God wants to do.....And we can't do it, *desperat* people. That is what is wrong with our faith. That's why we don't produce. We must believe that we can do nothing before we can believe that he can do anything and everything.

A lot of us are adding to our faith and trust in God our own works to accomplish what we think God wants us to do. It can't be done that way. If you look at your life and it is barren, just as dead as the worm of Sarah, unable to produce, God is able to make it produce. But you must trust God. You cannot trust yourself. You cannot try to work it out in your own effort. It cannot be Christ and me...It must be Christ alone in me doing his work. Then I will bear much fruit.

Most of us do not come to the point of complete helplessness, and total dependence upon Christ. We fight it. We ^{so} war against it. The ability to produce was not there.

(3D) But there was a third factor as to why Abraham ~~lacked faith in~~ God. And that was the age of himself and Sarah.

Look at Geneis 17:17...When God challenged Abraham, again, concerning the fact that he would be the father of many nations, Vs 17 says, "Abraham fell on his face and laughed.'

Now, you might not want to laugh this morrowning becuae you do not want to be rude. But the truth of the matter is that we are just like Abraham. And here he is ⁹⁹ 100 years old and God say, "Hay, you are going to be a Father.

Had a hard time Believing

"Yay, sure thing God"...and he cracks ^{up} ~~is~~ laughing.....

What if somebody comes up to you and says.."you know, I have really come to believe that your life is not doing, now, what God really intends. And God has directly revealed to me that you are going to be the most successful person who has ever lived.....You say, "sure thing, you have someone funny to tell me.".....

Of course God doesn't work that way. But the point is: that a lot of us have limited our vision of what ~~we~~ ^{we} believe God will do for us and through us and in us. Because lack of faith..... *Just like Ab.*

So Abraham laughed and as you know Sarah also laughed. And I don't blame them. But God's laugh on them is to call the son "Issac" which means in Hebrew "laughter".....And I kind-of like that. The humor of God. O.K. so you laugh...Take this....Issac is his name....And he socked it to them. Everywhere they went....What is the name of your son?....Laughter..... Funny looking kid isn't he?.....

You can imagine the conversations that went on in that day.....Why did you name your kid laughter?.....We didn't....God did.....How come?..... Well,.....you are not going to believe this.....We had that boy when I was 100 years old and Sarah was 90....."YOU WHAT?".....

You know what is interesting to me?...Back in chapter 15:6 it says that Abraham believed God and it was accounted ^{to} him as righteousness. He was a believer at this time.

A lot of people have not followed that closely. They think that Abraham became a believer after Isaac was born. That is not what is in the Bible. He was already a believer...And there he was sitting there with a problem in his life. And he can't believe what he said he believed in the first ~~place~~ place.....HAS THAT EVER HAPPENED TO YOU?..... *SA*

Oh, I believe in the power of God. I believe God can do miracles. And all of a sudden something happens in your life and you cry..."where is God!!!!....And doubts come in which causes discouragements....HOW TO BELIEVE GOD.....So their age was a real factor in his life. He was 100 years old and Sarah was 90. HOW IN THE WORLD CAN HE HAVE A SON. *ka*

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So, those were the three reasons behind Abraham's lack of faith.

(3C) Now, let's notice the choice that Abraham made to solve his own problem

And this I believe is filled with instruction. For we are much like Abraham. Most of us when we are in a situation like Abraham and Sarah... we have unbearably lives....we have a decision that needs to be made, and what do we do? ^{Do we trust God or do} We set out to solve our problem and then we ask God to bless our plans...rather than..saying, "Lord, I ~~don't~~/know what you have promised in your Word, and I will trust you to bring it about in my life." Instead, we say, "Lord, I really want to be committed, so bless what I am doing." And that is exactly the path Abraham took. He made a choice as a believer to solve his own problem. And thus he failed in three areas.

(1D) Abraham failed in receiving the advise of his wife. Chapter 16:2 reads:"So, Sarai said to Abram, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please go into my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children through her." AND ABRAM LISTENED TO THE VOICE OF SARAI."

In I Peter chapter 3 we learn that Sarah and Abraham are set apart as being AN EXAMPLE OF A MARRIAGE IN A HOME WHICH IS RIGHT. And yet, we know they had problems. In I Peter Sarah is used as an illustration of one who is in subjection to her husband; and who is trusting and obeying the Lord.

So, I do not believe that Sarah, here, is in violation. It is Abraham who is in violation. ^{WHY} What was Abraham doing?....., please notice the main issue?.....The issue is not..that husband should never take the advice of ^{his} their wives.....THAT IS NOT THE ISSUE.....The issue is that Abraham choiced to listen to someone else instead of....trusting and obeying God...God told Abraham that he was going to bless him with a son. But, Abraham didn't believe God; and thus, he set out to solve his problem by listening to someone else. In this case his wife.

We do the same thing....We have a problem. God gives us the answer in his word. But we don't believe. And seek advise from everyone else. And then we wonder why we have problems. Abraham failed when he did not trust in the promise of God....

(2D) Secondly, Abraham failed in rejecting the basic laws of marriage.

*Example - Provo = Philp 4:8-9
Lonely = Matt 5:7 - Blessed are those who are merciful - for they shall receive mercy*

Gen 16: 4 says "he went into Hagar and she conceived.".....Now, a lot of people have tried to ignore this by saying that it was the custom of that day and so forth....No.....Genesis 2:24 says "cleave to your wife." And the responsibility is on the husband.....What Abraham did was sin. And it was not right. And he knew it.....

Ke tu'ra

People say, Well, Abraham had other wives. He had one named Keturah. Keturah, he married after Sarah died.....It was never right to have more than one wife.....And we know, now, from archeology that it was a common practice among pagan, idolous people to have concubines and many wives. That was not God's plan. It was not God's plan at all...

Now, we read of many men in the Bible having more than one wife. But, that was not God's plan. God used those men and demonstrated that in spite of sin in their life, his grace ruled. But it was still wrong and he failed, by rejecting the basic laws of marriage.

And here is my application....When we make a choice to solve our own problems instead of believing God can do what he has promised, we often reject what we know to be God's will. We reject those basic principles of the Word of God even though we know that we ought not to. We do it anyway. *Thus the issue again is compromise*

(3D) The third thing involving the choice he made and ^{how} it ended in failure is...he failed in refusing to wait on the Lord. And that is the most *issue* important of them all. He failed in refusing to wait on the Lord. In chapter 16:3 you have an interesting point being made. It says: "and after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram, ~~as his wife.~~"

Now, we know according to the Bible in chapter 17:24-25 that Abraham was 99 years old when he was circumcised...YOU SAY, SO WHAT?...Well, notice in the next verse 17:25 it says, "that Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised with his father."

So subtract 13 from age 99 and you have Ishmael being born at 86. So, at age 85 Abraham was trying to solve this problem and disobeying God

by taking Hagar as his wife. Ten years before this at the age of 75 is when God brought all these wonderful promises to him. Ten years, now has passed and nothing has happened to him. And so, he decides he will solve the problem.

The thing that really impressed me was this: that God did not answer or fulfill his promise until Abram was 100 years old. Which means: that God ask Abraham to wait 25 years.....And I thought of my own life...I can hardly wait 25 minutes sometimes.....25 years.....And after 10 he decided to take things into his own hands...So he listen to the voice of his wife. He rejected the basic laws of marriage. And he produced a child by Hagar. Then he even tried to convince God that Ishmael should be the fulfillment of the promise. Hay, God. I just solved your problem. You don't have to worry anymore. And that is one of the most amusing situation in this whole story. Abraham trying to convince God that he had solved the problem. Lord, I solved the problem. And all the peity is flowing out of him. Just like it comes out of us.....Lord I solved the problem.

But it is never right to do wrong in order to get a chance to do right. Therefore to him who knoweth to do good and ~~does not~~ ^{fails} do it, for him it is sin.?
.....

He made a choice, alright. But he refused to wait upon the Lord. And I wonder how long some of us think we need to wait. We live in a fast age. And we seem to have lost the ability to wait on the Lord. God ask Abraham to wait 25 years. Some of us need the ground work of God's patience and long suffering in order to receive the blessing he wants in our lives.

Wait on the Lord. The Bible admonishes us to do this. Wait on the Lord.

and Don't go out in violation of scripture to solve your own problems. But look in faith in your problems to the Lord and say, "God I believe you have the answers. If not today, then maybe 10 years down the road. But God I am going to trust you. I know that you are the one that can do it."

HOW TO BELIEVE GOD?.....WAIT ON THE LORD.....

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Secondly
~~Let's Come to the main issue.~~
(4C) Now, ~~I would like you to notice~~ the character of his faith. *Believe 96* And for this you must go to Romans 4:16....Romans chapter 4 and verse 16.

The character of real faith was in the life of Abraham. You look at his life and conclude that he failed God...Well, he did, ~~mentally~~. *For Paul* Abraham learned through his experiences and demonstrated the kind of faith you and I ought to have. And this is a tremendous challenge. There are ~~six~~ things involved. So follow along as we read together..

(Read Romans 4:16-~~20~~)

You read this and you say, is the Bible lying? After all we just read the story. But notice the key is in Verse 19 when "he was about 100 years old." You see, Abraham never got strighten out in his faith until he was 100. *And* God came to him in great force and said, "Listen, Abraham, one year from today...you have laughed at me...one year from today and you are going to have a son and you are going to name him Isaac.

At that moment Abraham exercised the *kind of* ~~real~~ faith that the Bible is talking about. He heard God's word and he knew it and he believed it with all of his heart. And at that moment we have a ~~commentary~~ *commentary* written about his faith. And I want to show you what led him to do what he did. *and* which was to be circumcised.

(1D) Number one...He believed God Vs 17..."he ~~was~~ believed".....Hebrews 11:6 says that he who comes to God must believe that he is. If you are coming to God and wanting him to do something, but in your heart you doubt that he exist or he is able, God is not going to do anything....You must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him. *according to His will*

(2D) Secondly, he believed in hope against hope. ...Vs 18....When everybody looked at the situation and said there was no hope, he believed in hope. Even though it was against human knowledge...

I don't have any more assurance today than I had ~~20~~ 20 years ago that Jesus Christ is coming again. In spite of all the signs and evidences of the world. There are ~~no~~ *no* real assurances that he is going to come today ~~anymore~~ anymore

than he was going to come ²⁰ years ago. Except, that I know we are ~~ten~~ years closer to his coming.

And yet, I ~~hat~~ still believe that he is coming. If the whole world turns into peace for the moment, if all the nations in the middle East all of a sudden changed, if a third world war completely ~~thru~~ changed all the nations of the world so that it didn't match Bible prophecy, I would still believe that Christ was coming again. And people through history have held to that belief.

What ~~are~~ ^{am} we saying? WHAT DO WE BELIEVE? Most of us are like those people from Missurori: YOU HAVE TO SHOW ME. Give me evidence God..God doesn't have to give us evidence. God can come at any moment...Against all hope Abraham believed in hope. He had hope and faith and confidence in God. Listen, if you are believing God, and you have faith in him, it involves hope.

Romans 8:24 says we are saved ^{through} upon hope. The way you are saved is the fact that you have hope resting in the return of Jesus Christ. He is alive and he is coming back.

If there is no hope in your faith, ^{IF} you don't believe anything is going to happen, nothing will.....

(3D) Third, he believed in the face of very difficult circumstances.

Vs 19.....We have already mentioned this so we will just pass over it lightly. 'He contemplated not his own body, now as good as dead, and the deadness of Sarah's womb.' The circumstances were difficult in his life. Especially in the light that he was going to have a son, according to the promise of God. But, he believed in the face of these circumstances. And sometimes ^{dear friend} people, we must believe in face of what looks like very difficult circumstances. It looks like it willn't really happen, but we believe it anyway, because our faith is in God not in the circumstances.

(4D) Number four, he believed without wavering, according to vs 20.

"With respect ^{to} the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief."

Now, what does that mean?.....The Greek word means "to judge through." And it is often translated "doubt." A person who judges through something

and decides on the bases of his own reason that it can't work. And so it is doubt in what God says can work..And the Bible says when He really opened his eyes and saw God work in his life and that he was wrong in the past, that God would not use Hagar, that God would not use Ishmael, that he was going to use Isaac, Abraham finally realized that he could not waver. He had to believe God alone. He could not solve his own problems. He tried and he failed.

(5D) Number 5, He believed God could do what he promised, Vs 21.

"and being fully assured that what He had promised, he was able also to perform.".....He believed that God could do what he promised. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT??????

(6D) The sixth thing which I think is so important to the character of ~~his~~ real faith is ^{The} sign of faith. Look at vs 9 of chapter 4...Vs 9

He is talking about faith....(Read Vs 9-11)

WHAT IS THE POINT? ...Circumcision...Why did God have circumcision among the Jews? It was a sign, it was a seal, it was an evidences, a deminstratic of faith in the promise of God through the line of Abraham coming down to the Messiah. It was the one thing which made them stand out from all the nations of the world. They believed that this was the sign, the evidence of the Promise.

DID CIRCUMCISION SAVED THEM?.....NO.....Abraham believed long before he was circumcised.

And I thought how meaning ful. For in the Christian faith we have the same thing. God admonishes us to be baptized. WILL BAPTISM SAVE YOU?.....NO.....it will not save you.

But ^{Bapt} it is a seal, it is a deminstration, it is a conviction that I have been born again. That I have been buried with Christ and I have been raised with him to the newness of life. And so I am baptized. And baptism is a seal of what happened in my life....

omit And then I think in the believers life there ^{are} ~~are~~ many cases inwhich
Comments -

of belief in
 the evidence ~~that~~ believe God is there...I don't know what it will mean in your life.....It might be done with lesser things.....It might be to act upon what I know to be truth and what God has shown me to do.... But there will always be that evidence that will come forth from our life that we are truly believing God and him alone.

Third

5C) The Cure is simple...Genesis 21They had a son.....

That is the cure. All of his attempts to solve his own problems. The solution was there in God's power. And Sarah concieved.

I wish all of us could recreate that moment. I wish we were all there in the tent when it happened. I can visualize that all the people in the surrounding area was trying to get into that tent, in order to experience a woman 90 years old giving birth to a child. And all asking: ~~is it~~ possible? Can this really be true?....And then the baby is born and the rejoicing of the people when they see the new born babe....

And the Bible teaches us that this witness and testimony spread through out the land.....They ~~new~~ ^{know} that God was alive....A son was born in their old age..... Do you know that God is alive?.....Do you believe that God can do something in your life?....

Or are you like those people who cried Hosanna to the Son of David. And then one short week later they cried Crucify him, crucify him.....

Do not be tossed here and there by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, but speak the truth in love and believe God....

That He knows what He is doing and what is best for your life
Shall we close in prayer

Father we thank you for your Word. What a tremendous revelation to us about our own problem and our need of trust in you. I know that there are some here in this congregation, today, who have not the assurance that if they were to die tonight that they would be in heaven with Christ. They are lacking faith and confidence in Christ alone ; and God, I pray that you would bring to them the conviction that only Jesus can save them. His blood that was shed at the cross paid for all sin. And that I must believe that he died for me..that he is alive and coming back. (over)

CLOSING PRAYER

Father we thank you for your Word. What a tremendous revelation to us about our own problem and our need of trusting in you. I know that there are some here in this congregation, today, who have not the assurance that if they were to die right now that they would be in heaven with Christ. They are lacking faith and confidence in Christ alone; and God, I pray that you would bring to them the conviction that only Jesus can save them. His blood that was shed at the cross paid for all sin. And that I must believe that he died for me. That he is alive and coming back, that He is the eternal God. The only one who deserves all my love.

I pray, Father, for those who are believers, that they might believe God. That you are able to do all that you have promised. And forgive us Lord, for our limited vision. Thinking that you will do only what we have ~~seen~~ or ~~heard~~ experienced in the past *or what our own personal desires are*

Lord, give us a vision that we can bear much ~~of~~ fruit. Not because of what we do, but because we depend upon you; for without you we can do nothing. We pray for Jesus Sake.....Amen