

Journey of Faith

Whenever we talk about faith, we think about Abraham. He is regarded as one of the most important people in the Bible. What comes to your mind whenever you remember Abraham? The binding of Isaac? Or Leaving for the unknown land? Usually, people think about the sacrifice of Isaac first. Based on that event, they understand the incident of leaving for the unknown land where God pointed him to go. People usually think that between the two incidents, there will be no difference in faith. We understand Abraham as a Giant of faith! Is it true?



When we read Genesis, we need to be careful to understand whether Abraham left home by his gigantic faith. The Bible says the first story about Abraham in Genesis 11:31 that "One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai, and his grandson Lot and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there."

Where did God appear for the first time? Ur of the Chaldeans, Mesopotamia, where the father worshipped other gods. In Stephen's last sermon in Acts, we read that God appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia. Who led Abraham to Haran? His Father Terah. The Father led his Family. God appeared in a dream or in a vision to

Abraham in Mesopotamia. Abraham must have been in great distress to express that God appeared to him, let him leave Ur. He tried to express it to his father with all his best, with sincerity, with sweat, and all his truth. His father understood that a great God appeared in his son's dream. And Terah and the whole family left Mesopotamia because the father was the leader of the family. So, when Abraham came out of Mesopotamia, he was worshipping other gods. (Joshua 24: 2-3)

We find a different fact here whether Abraham was a man of faith from the beginning. We easily think that all his family served idols, but only Abraham served God, Jehovah. So God took him out of his home. Was it so? Not at all. He was an idol worshipper, but the glorious God appeared to him and called him toward a long, blessed faith journey.

It was a prevenient grace according to UMC language. This fact gives us great comfort because Abraham was a person who was the same as us. When we are frustrated about our faith, we can have comfort from the life of Abraham, who was an idol worshipper. If you read the message translation, the meaning will be clearer. **Joshua 24: 2-3, "This is what the Lord says; 'A long time ago your ancestors, Terah, and his sons Abraham and Nahor, lived to the east of the River Euphrates, they worshipped other gods. I took your ancestor Abraham from the far side of the river."**



Let us go further into Abraham's story. In **Genesis 12:2-3, God blesses Abraham with the famous blessings "I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."**

It was a blessing simply poured upon Abraham. Usually, we think in the cause-and-effect worldly logic. When a person is blessed, there should be a reason for the blessing. But in the case of Abraham, it was not based on his faith, it was simply

given, we call it grace. What is different from the blessing through belief in Jesus? **“If you believe in Jesus, you will be children of God, all the blessings of heaven and earth will be yours.”**

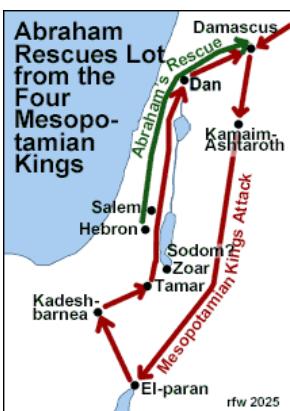
We are under the same grace. The only reason we became Christians is that God called us and saved us. It was the same with me. I went to the church by the bell sound of a church on the hill. And the sound took me. The Spirit took me. God pulled me out of my family who didn't know God at all. Truly we do not have any reason to be proud of ourselves because there was nothing that we did for this glorious journey of faith. All was done by the Lord. Eventually, all my family was saved.



There was a dramatic change in Abraham's life. It is when Abraham went down to Egypt because of a drought in Canaan in Genesis 12. When he went down to Egypt, he had fear of Egyptians who might kill him because of the beauty of Sarah. So he let Sarah talk, she was his sister. This allowed him to save his life but resulted in Pharaoh taking Sarah. However, God intervened, causing sickness in Pharaoh's family and forcing him to return Sarah to Abraham. In response, Abraham went to an altar he built before and called on the name of Yahweh.

Pharaoh was a powerful figure in ancient times; he was regarded as a god. Witnessing God's protection and power transformed Abraham, strengthening his faith in God's ability to control all situations. Abraham became very bold. He learned of God's love, power, and protection through these events.

From idol worshipper, God shaped and persuaded his faith toward the Almighty God. Abraham became a man of faith. At this point, he heard the news that his nephew, Lot, living in Sodom was taken in the middle of war between Canaan nations. He decides to save Lot with the 318 servants who trained at home and saved Lot. What do you think about this story? It is a really crazy and amazing story. It was not a thing that a simple person can do at all. This battle with many Canaan nations is possible only through the faith in God who can protect from all kinds of danger with cosmic power.



What do we want to learn from Abraham's faith? Faith is a gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8) Faith is God's persuading process toward God. Faith is wooing process for the heart of his people. Faith is a journey toward fiery passion for love for us. This passion is described in Song of Songs 8:7, “Many waters cannot quench love, nor will rivers overflow it; If a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, It would be utterly despised.”

God came to persuade us with that love. It is about relationships. Abraham didn't start with faith in God. No. God came first. God shaped us. God will bring us to the perfection, to the holiness of God. I want to quote just one scripture; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, “May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.”

Abraham's faith was growing continuously. He knew that God was able, God was enough. So our scripture says, “He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust [or unbelief] made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.” (Romans 4:19-21)

When God persuaded Abraham continuously with power, passion, mercy, and with grace, Abraham reaches eventually to the place where he brought his only beloved son on the Mt. Moriah as a sacrifice. What length of time did it take for this to take place? Almost hundred years. To be a mature Christian, it takes a really long time. **When the love of God touches on our skin and bones thoroughly, we know eventually that God can do all things; God is enough; we are safe in God; there is nothing to fear.**

Until that time, we need to listen to the guidance of God. And follow his will in our lives. It is a personal relationship. We don't need to be in a hurry toward the perfection of life. Patiently and humbly listen to the guidance of the Lord, and we follow God. There is no reason to despair in the lives of Christians, because God is holding our lives and your lives.

In Kenosis hymn in Phil 2; "Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross." What do you read here? Jesus who was God, gave up Glory of God, and died on the cross as a criminal. It is a scarily glorious love of God for us. God loves us, God comes into our place, God died for us. What should we desire more?

God gave Isaac to Abraham and Let Abraham sacrifice Isaac. God can give; God can take away. God can give all at any time, and God can take back all at any time. To give is a blessing for us. To take away is an even greater blessing. Greater promise was given to Abraham.

Is there anything on our part? What is it? It is to heed the voice of God humbly, be obedient to the voice of the invisible God. It is to give up our control and will power to confirm with our sight, sense, and hearing, or to understand with our brain knowledge. So, we enter into the life that is multidimensional. It is to enter into the life of gift. The promise will open a wide scene of future. We become a unique person, an art piece, a poiema.