

A Word from Kathy

This week we are going to take a closer look at Abraham. He is a wonderful example of a man whose faith was tested many times and found faithful. But the Bible is clear that Abraham was not saved because of anything he did or did not do, but because he placed his trust in God who is always faithful. Read the chapter at least twice and ask God to open your eyes, ears and heart to what he wants to say to you.

Observation

1. No man would be more highly esteemed to the Jews than their father Abraham. God called him out of Ur to follow him to a place that he would later show him. Abraham packed up and went in obedience to the voice of God. This was a test; would he trust God with his future? Could he trust God to provide for his needs? Read Gen. 12:1-9 and make a list of the promises God gave Abraham in Gen. 12:2-3.
2. Abraham had left Ur and settled in Haran, and when he was 75 years old, he departed from Haran and moved into the land of Canaan. What do we see Abraham doing in Gen. 12:7-8? What does this action tell us about his faith? What did it reveal to all who were around him at that time?
 - Abraham was not a perfect man; there were times when fear got the better of him, but because of God's faithfulness to his promises, Abraham was delivered. You may want to read Gen. 12:10-20.
 - There were also times of frustration and quarrels within his family that caused him grief, but his faith in God's care was not shaken. Read Gen. 13.
 - Even though Abraham was not a military man, God gave him a miraculous victory in Gen. 14 over many trained men of war.
 - We see Gen. 15:6 quoted in Romans 4:3. The word "credited" is an accounting term which means it was moved from one account to the other. It is also quoted in Gal.3:6. Over and over in the scripture we see that salvation is the gift of God. Eph. 2:8-9: *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
3. Look at the words of King David, a man highly esteemed by Jews and Christians throughout the generations. Romans 4:6-8 is a quote from Ps. 32:1-2. It may help you to understand this verse better to define some of the words.

Blessed - to be truly happy.

Transgression - rebellious, lawless deeds, violation of the law.

Forgiven - to send away, to give up a debt.

Now put Romans 4:6-8 into your own words.

4. What does David say is necessary for a man or a woman to be truly happy (vss. 7-8)? Is it fame, fortune, power, or possibly something else?
5. What does Paul state over again in Rom. 4:9-12?
6. The laws given to the Jews were of great importance and served God's purpose. But Abraham was given the promises of God for himself and his descendants long before the law was given. Why do you suppose Paul is bringing this up again and again? (Read vss. 14-16.)
7. God had made promises to Abraham; he said his descendants would be like what?
Gen. 15:5
Gen. 32:12
Abraham was 100 years old (Sarah his wife was 90 years old); how were they described in Romans 4:19?
Yet in spite of these facts of nature, what did Abraham believe? Notice the progression of his faith.
8. What facts does Paul want us to focus on in Romans 4:10 and Romans 4:13?

Application

9. Abraham's faith has been a source of inspiration and encouragement to generation after generation of people. Why is having this kind of faith often so difficult for us to do?
 - We have the written word of God with many more promises than Abraham ever had. We have examples of men and women throughout history that God faithfully cared for. He met their needs, delivered them from harm and protected their families, answered their prayers, and yet we still have trouble believing God will do it for us.

Why is this?

Remember what we saw in Romans 1:16: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."* Go back and look at your notes on this verse. Are you struggling with unbelief, are you shrinking back, timid when it comes to taking God at his word?

10. Do you have days when you feel God loves you and other days when you think he might not? Is that truth or is it a lie given to keep us from the abundant life God has for us?

Jer. 31:3 *"...I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you."*

Romans 8:35 *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger or sword?"*

11. Look at verse 20; what does it say about Abraham's faith that might seem unusual to us? What did his actions reveal about his heart?
12. How does your faith stand the test of time? Even when prayers have gone on for an extended period of time and have not been answered as you had thought God would answer them?
13. Is there a prayer you have been praying and you are beginning to waver in unbelief? Search God's word for a verse that will strengthen your faith, a verse you can memorize to confront the evil one when he comes to cause you to doubt. God's word is the only weapon listed in Ephesians 6:10-17. In order to be victorious, a soldier must be experienced with his weapon and able to use it skillfully in battle. You are wise to spend this time in God's word; it will not come back void.
14. If someone asked you how they could be reconciled to God, what would you say? What if they said "You have no idea how wicked I've been, I don't know how someone like me could have a relationship with the holy God of the universe." What could you share with them?