

By Faith – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph

Hebrews 11

Introduction

1. The Hebrews were experiencing a great test of their faith in the persecution they were facing.
2. However, as chapter 11 manifests, they were far from the only people of God to experience trials of faith.
3. There's always someone who has experienced something beyond what even we have – **Hebrews 12:3-4**
4. Abraham has already been discussed, but perhaps one of the greatest displays of faith in the history of God's people occurred after he had already been tested and proven his faith many times.
5. Such faith was carried on in his progeny.
- I. By Faith Abraham (**vv. 17-19**)
 - A. Faith is Always Subject to Tests
 - a. Abraham's faith, and God's promises:
 - i. Called to go out of his home and land – **Genesis 12**
 1. **Genesis 12:4** – 75 yrs.
 - ii. Promise further confirmed, and Abraham's faith accounted by God for righteousness – **Genesis 15**
 1. **Genesis 15:2-3** – I go childless, is Eliezer of Damascus my heir?
 2. **Genesis 15:4** – No, one from your own body.
 - iii. Sarai gives Hagar to Abraham to bear children by her – **Genesis 16** – Abraham consented.
 1. Ismael born when Abraham was 86 yrs old – **Genesis 16:16**
 - iv. Lord told Abraham he would have the son of promise through Sarah, and she laughed – **Genesis 18**
 1. **Genesis 18:11** – Advanced in age, Sarah past age of childbearing.
 - v. The Lord gives Abraham and Sarah a son as He promised – Isaac – **Genesis 21**
 1. **Genesis 21:5** – Abraham is 100 yrs old.
 - vi. Sarah tells Abraham to cast out Hagar and her son Ishmael, and God reassures Abraham that in Isaac the blessings would come – **Genesis 21:12**
 - vii. God tests Abraham by commanding that he offer up Isaac – **Genesis 22**
 1. Isaac weaned – **Genesis 21:8**
 2. Isaac old enough to understand sacrificial practice – **Genesis 22:7**

- viii. Abraham had been promised Isaac by God and was consistent in his faith – **Romans 4:20-22** – did not waver but strengthened in faith.
 - 1. However, even after his display of faith throughout this time he was not exempt from tests of faith.
 - 2. It was still his obligation to prove himself to God.
- b. God was testing Abraham, and through Abraham’s actions his faith was proven to God – **Genesis 22:1, 12** – **“NOW I KNOW THAT YOU FEAR GOD”**
 - i. It was not unjust or unfair for God to require that of Abraham as proof of his faith.
 - ii. It was Abraham’s responsibility as a child of God to respond in faith.
- c. We should not view trials negatively, but as necessities – **1 Peter 1:6-7** – **“if need be”**
- d. We should rejoice in trials, knowing our faith can grow from them, and we can prove our character before God – **James 1:2-3; Romans 5:3-5**
 - i. We should know that as long as we draw breath, no matter how many times we have proven ourselves, we are subject to further tests we must endure.
- B. Faithful Obedience Begins in the Heart
 - a. Abraham was kept from carrying through with the slaying of his son – **Genesis 22:10-12** – had taken the knife to slay him.
 - b. However, the Hebrew writer says Abraham offered Isaac by faith – **Hebrews 11:17-19**
 - i. **(v. 17)** – offered up Isaac
 - ii. **(v. 19)** – had received him from the dead figuratively – INDICATES THAT ABRAHAM ALREADY VIEW ISAAC AS DEAD.
 - iii. Abraham had already committed to obeying God’s command, and in his mind had already offered his son.
 - c. Such unhesitating faith is cultivated over time – started with Abraham obeying when God called him – **Hebrews 11:8**
 - d. Our hearts must be predetermined to obey God regarding anything – **Acts 17:11** – approaching God’s word with readiness.
 - i. Readiness – *prothymia* – (*pro*, “forward,” *thumos*, “mind, disposition) (VINE)
 - 1. Predisposition (STRONG)
 - ii. Readiness for what? READINESS TO RESPOND TO THE MESSAGE IF THEY FOUND IT TO BE SO.
 - iii. **Ezra 7:10** – prepared heart to seek, and do the law of the Lord.
 - e. Obedience to God’s word is decided before the command even comes – it comes from the humility God calls us to – **James 1:21**

- i. Meekness – *prautēs* – “It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting” (VINE)
 - C. Faith Trusts in God’s Power and Promise No Matter the Situation
 - a. Abraham’s dilemma – (1) God promised, and His command to offer Isaac would in effect nullify His promise; (2) However, the commands of God must be obeyed.
 - b. Abraham’s thoughts revealed – **Hebrews 11:19** – not suggesting such was accurate, but what else was he supposed to think.
 - i. Had faith Isaac would return with him – **Genesis 22:5** – we will come back.
 - c. Abraham didn’t have to be able to understand fully all the seeming conflicts of the situation, and God’s plan to resolve such.
 - d. Faith doesn’t have to see because it is convicted by the evidence God already supplies – **Hebrews 11:1** – Faith simply acts on God’s word – **Romans 10:17**
 - e. Rather than doubting God’s expectations in our inability to always comprehend the “why” and the “how” we need to just obey:
 - i. Plan of salvation; work of the church; worship of the church; etc.
 - ii. Questions regarding what is best, and why this way, etc. – just obey.
 - iii. Just hold fast the pattern – **2 Timothy 1:13; Hebrews 8:5** – we don’t need to fully comprehend the “why” of the details in order to just carry them out.
 - D. Faith Puts God Before Children
 - a. Isaac, while not Abraham’s only son, was the son of promise, and focus throughout Abraham’s walk of faith – **Hebrews 11:17-18**
 - b. No doubt, a great facet of this test included Abraham’s affection for his son versus his devotion to God.
 - c. Eli did the opposite of Abraham – **1 Samuel 2:29; 3:13** – did not restrain his sons.
 - d. Christ calls us to be fully devoted to Him even over our family – **Luke 12:51-53; 14:26-27** – not peace, but a sword, and the call of discipleship – including children.
 - i. So many love their children more than Christ, and show that by giving place to them.
 - ii. Some do this thinking they’re doing right by their child, but the best thing for a child is parents who are firstly devoted to God.
- II. By Faith Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph (**vv. 20-22**)
 - A. Faith is Confident of Future Blessings
 - a. Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph all three learned of the promises of God given to their forefathers, but never lived to see the realization of such. However, they blessed their children with these promises in mind, and they did so in confidence of God.

- b. This confidence is ultimately expressed in our preparation for such blessings according to God’s plans – **2 Peter 1:8-11; 3:13-14, 18** – not shortsighted, but growing in faith with eyes on the prize, anticipating the new order by preparation in holiness.
- B. Faith Never Stops Worshiping God
 - a. Jacob was near death when he blessed Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.
 - b. The writer cites Genesis 47:31 from the LXX – **“And he said, swear to me; and he swore to him. And Israel did reverence, leaning on the top of his staff.”**
 - c. Jacob worshiped God in his extremely weakened condition, unable to stand without his staff.
 - d. Our excitement and resolve to worship should never be dampened, not even with age – **Psalm 146:1-2**
 - i. We must remember what we are looking forward to doing in heaven for eternity – **Revelation 14:1-3**
- C. Faith Persists to the End of Life
 - a. Like Jacob, Joseph’s faith persisted to the end, and did not shrink at life’s end, but showed itself as strong as ever.
 - i. **Genesis 50:22-26** – he died not having seen the promises but had such great faith that he had the Israelites take an oath to take his remains with them when they went into the land – HE KNEW THEY WOULD POSSESS IT AS GOD SAID.
 - ii. There was nothing present to indicate what Joseph said would take place. Things got worse before they even were delivered. But Joseph had God’s word.
 - b. Faith works until it enters that rest prepared, and leans on God’ for strength until the end – **Hebrews 4:8-10, 14-16**

Conclusion

1. We need to understand the necessity of our faith being tested, and always have a heart resolved to obey God, fully trusting in His plans.
2. We must persist in faith, never losing confidence in the promises of God, and having the resolve to endure until the end.