

In our journey through faith this month, we will come across key verses that act as sign posts along the way. Last week

Hebrews 11:1 answered the question ‘What is faith?’

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

This week the key verse is Genesis 15:6

⁶Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

We are not leaving Hebrews however, in fact we are firmly into Hebrews 11 : 8-19.

We are going to explore 4 things about Abraham. They are

Faith obeys when God says “Go”.

Faith believes God’s promise of great rewards

Faith believes in a home in heaven

Faith believes God will find a way.

For background reading Genesis 11 to 25 is where you read the story.

Abram is a patriarch in three religions. Jews, Christians and Muslims.

For Jews he is THE patriarch. For Muslims he is a prophet. For us he is the example of receiving righteousness by faith. Abraham is a huge character standing tall across the whole of the Bible.

We are going to base our consideration of Abram on Hebrews 11: 8-19 but there are other passages that

comment on Abraham Romans 4:1-25 is a commentary in this verse.

Galatians 3:6-9

James 2:20-24

Jesus also spoke about him in Matthew 3:9; 8:11; Mark 12:26; Luke 3:8; 13:16; 13:28; 16:22-30; Luke 19:9; 20:37. Mainly to respond to the Jew belief in Abraham being their father and to him being in heaven.

READ Hebrews 11:8-19

Lets, however concentrate on 4 events in Abram's life.

First his call. He was living in Ur in what is now Iraq. His father Terah moved to Haran further up the Tigris, Euphrates valley and died. Then God speaks to him.

Read Genesis 12:1-4

What Abram knew about God is difficult to work out. But he heard God speak. He listened and, most importantly, he obeyed. He left the security of family and urban life to become a nomad in a foreign land. Simply because God told him to and promised to bless him.

So lesson one is

Faith obeys when God says "Go".

Jesus says to us, in John 14:6

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

So if you are like Abram with a hazy idea of what God is, look at Jesus. Jesus calls you to follow him, to obey him, to believe in him and to put your faith in him. And Abram tells us, don't expect to have explanations of where you are going and what will happen. Faith is believing God when there is no evidence that what God says is good.

In our wonderful culture, this is a key lesson.

The advert says you can buy happiness but God says do not covet what your neighbour has. You have to live with others having what you would like, while you enjoy what you have. Faith says God's way is best.

We are proud of our greed culture. Take what you can when you get the chance. But God says to not steal. Faith says God's way is best.

Marriage is an afterthought but God says No to sex outside of marriage. Faith says God's way is best.

We worship our football teams, our film actors, our sporting stars. So we give up on church so we can watch their latest performance. Gods says No other gods before me. Faith says God's way is best.

I could go on, but you get the point. Faith says God's way is best. So when God says do something, just do it!

That sometimes means actually moving, as Jean Peters did many years ago to PNG, Tim & Sarah did to China and Stewart did to Albania, and Darren has

moved at God's call. More often we are called to choose to live the Jesus way, just where you are.

Lesson two is

Faith believes God's promise of great rewards

READ Genesis 15:1-6

The headline should probably read

Faith believes God himself is our great reward

God does not offer wealth. He does not offer health. God does not offer fame or protection or a peaceful life. Primarily he offers himself. Being satisfied with God is the primary end of faith. Jesus declared "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*"

The objective is to have a good relationship with God, not based on what you do but what Jesus has done. In this life you will have the same troubles as your godless neighbours, maybe more but you have the presence of the Holy Spirit to be with you through every trial of life and through death into heaven. At the end of the passage in Hebrews, we are called to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. We must avoid being so taken up with other blessings that we forget the main one. We have Jesus!

But Second to having God in this passage, Abraham uniquely is promised a vast family. But he never sees it! Most of his life he is childless, and the child he has, Ishmael, is not the child of God's promise. As far as I

can see, when he died, Abraham's family was just Isaac, Ishmael, Esau and Jacob.

Did God fail in his promise ? NO! As I said earlier, today Abram is a patriarch in three religious groups. Jews, Christians and Muslims. That means 55% of the world population have Abraham as a father figure. But it did not look like that to Abraham. But he believed God. How it was to happen was a mystery and required several miracles. The key point here is faith did not see the outcome of the promise but Abraham believed. And it says

Key verse Genesis 15:6

⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Are you in Credit? That is a question you don't have to answer in church but if you are in debt, speak to someone about it, there are ways out of debt and there is help available. CAP or Christians against Poverty provide a valuable service to anyone who asks. But This is not about your credit card account, this is about your relationship with God.

The Bible says All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. In other words we are all in spiritual debt. The bad news is that there is no way we can clear that debt. The Good News is that God paid the debt on the cross. Therefore we have to be like Abraham we have to believe and we then receive the credit, not of our righteousness but of his righteousness.

You can read up about this in Romans chapter 3.

Lesson three is

Faith believes in a home in heaven

Abraham left the city of Haran to follow God. He sought a city that God had planned for him. And we do the same. In John 14 Jesus says this:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going.”

⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

⁷ If you really know me, you will know^[b] my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

So, like Abraham, we seek a place in heaven that Jesus has prepared for us. The route map is Jesus himself., just as Abraham was told that God was going to lead him.

Much has been written about what heaven is like. Its chief glory however is not that the streets are paved with gold but that the centre of it is Jesus. He is the reward of faith. To be with him , forever.

Finally lesson four

Faith believes God will find a way.

Last week when Darren mentioned this story of Abraham being asked to sacrifice his son he rightly pointed out we find it difficult to understand. We must however, remember that human sacrifice of children was not uncommon. Second, God stopped Abraham. Thirdly God says that human sacrifice is unacceptable to him. It was a test of faith not a means of satisfying God. I understand that what God was looking for was the obedience of faith not the sacrifice. Hebrews says Abraham thought God could raise Isaac from the dead. But he trusted God to find a way through the impossible. He had experience of God doing just that. He and Sarah produced Isaac when they were over 100 years old. And God stops Abraham from sacrificing his son and offers him a lamb in Isaac's place. That is why John the Baptist calls Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Salvation does not come from what we do but what God has done in sending Jesus to be the lamb that was slain in our place. So in the story of Abram we have a parable of the death of Jesus. There is nothing you or I can do that will satisfy God. Instead, God provides a lamb, Jesus, as a substitute in our place.

That immediately poses some major questions about God. We have just dismissed human sacrifice as abhorrent to God. In addition the Bible is quite clear that you can't be substituted for in paying the price of your sins by anyone else, each of us should die for our

own sins. However, what is fundamental to our salvation is that Jesus did not have to take the punishment for his own sin AND he willingly offered to bear our sins himself before the foundation of the earth. That underlines why child sacrifice and substituting is banned by God. He already has a plan, the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament look forward to the day when Jesus would bear our sins in his body on the cross. Uniquely being a Christian is not what you do but what you receive by faith. When you ask Jesus to be your Saviour, you may not see or feel anything different, but God has put new eternal life into you. He has begun a work of recreation and he will complete it.

God has found a way and that way is Jesus.

To receive what God offers, you have to do what Abram did, you have to believe God, not trusting in your own goodness but in his infinite grace, turning from the sin you have committed, asking him for forgiveness and believing that he wipes the slate clean and declares you righteous because of what Jesus has done, not what you have done. Which brings us back to our key verse:

Gen 15:6 ***Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.***

So to review what we have discovered let me remind you of the 4 pointers:

Faith obeys when God says “Go”.

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

Faith believes God's promise of great rewards

Jesus is the great reward.

Faith believes in a home in heaven

Jesus has gone to heaven to prepare a place for you.

Faith believes God will find a way.

Jesus has died, Jesus is risen, Jesus will come again!

therefore you can be righteous by faith because he has paid the price.!