



What Abraham Has Taught Me

Lessons from the life of Abraham

By Michael Grooms

[Note: this article has been sourced from the Carolina Messenger. The original can be viewed at: <https://carolinamessenger.wordpress.com/2016/02/24/what-abraham-has-taught-me-michael-grooms/>]

Editor's Note: Brother Grooms recently made a sermon in which he expounded upon the points made in this article. He preached it at the Boiling Springs Church of Christ in Boiling Springs, SC, on February 21, 2016. We encourage you to listen to his lesson [here](#).

By faith, Abraham obeyed..." (Heb. 11:8a). Thus begins the entry into the "Hall of Faith" found in Hebrews 11 concerning this great patriarch. To be eulogized in such manner would be a great honor; for such a eulogy would indicate a life of faithfulness to God. If one is to hope to be remembered in such a fashion as was Abraham, it would behoove one to heed the lessons learned from Abraham's life. The scope of these lessons would far surpass the limited space available in this article, so it will suffice to reflect upon four events which tested the faith of Abraham and apply the lessons taught in his example.

Abraham stood the test of separation. He was called by God to leave home and go to an unknown place. Hebrews 11:8 tells us that "he went out, not knowing where he was going." Though his destination was uncertain, his trust in the One who would guide him was not. He left that which was dear to him. He traded comfort for hardship, to an end that was unknown to him. He left home, and many of the relationships that went with it (Gen. 12:1). The child of God must also face the test of separation. For some, to obey God means to be cut off from family. For others, it may mean the loss of a job. For many, it will mean separation from friends. For all, it means separation from the sinfulness of the world. Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than the passing pleasures of sin (Heb. 11:25). God has commanded His people, "Come out from among them, and be separate" (2 Cor. 6:17). Separation is often difficult. It requires self-denial. It may require of one a loss of things or relationships that are cherished. Abraham left home with an end in mind. He did not know where that end was, but He knew that God had promised, and God is faithful. God has promised that He will never leave nor forsake the faithful. He has promised to take us home.

Abraham withstood the temptation of power. In the fourteenth chapter of Genesis, the account is given of a great battle which ensued at the Valley of Siddim. Four

kings with their armies defeated five kings, which included the armies of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot, who dwelled in the area of Sodom and Gomorrah, was taken captive. When Abraham learned of Lot's capture, he gathered his 318 trained servants and pursued the five kings. He defeated the kings, delivered Lot and the other captives, and recovered the goods that had been stolen from Sodom and Gomorrah. Upon his return, he was met by Melchizedek, who was king of Salem and a priest of God. In his blessing, Melchizedek pronounced two great truths: God is the possessor of Heaven and Earth, and it was God who had delivered Abraham's enemies into his hand (Gen. 14:18-20). Was it mere coincidence that Abraham would be reminded of these two truths just before he would be offered wealth and power from the King of a wicked people? The king of Sodom asked of Abraham that he only give him back the people who had been taken captive, and offered Abraham all the spoils that had been taken. Gen. 14:11 states that this was all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions. This must have been an immense amount of wealth! Abraham refused, repeating in his reply that which Melchizedek had stated, that God is the possessor of Heaven and earth. Abraham had vowed to God that he would not take anything from the king of Sodom. He refused on the basis that the King of Sodom would have no claim to Abraham's power or wealth. Abraham resisted receiving wealth and power from an evil king, because he belonged to God. From this event, the child of God is reminded that we belong to God. The world may allure and offer wealth and power, but God alone can give eternal life. When tempted by the allurements of the world, the child of God must remember who he or she is. We belong to God. Paul warns of the dangers of such allurements in 1 Timothy 6:6-12. He warns that such greed brings destruction, and eternal damnation (perdition). The child of God is warned to flee these things and lay hold on eternal life. There will be many times that the world will offer that which is appealing. At such times, look to Abraham's example and choose rather to serve God and trust in His power.

Abraham proved faithful in the test of delay. In an age of instant gratification, the Christian would do well to learn a lesson from Abraham's faith in delayed fulfillment. Abraham's wife, Sarah, could not bear children. This meant that Abraham had no heir. This within itself was considered a calamity in the ancient world. To not have an heir meant that the generational inheritance pattern was broken, and there was no son to care for the couple in their older years. This is why Abraham was so intent on having an heir that he considered making his servant Eliezer his heir (Gen. 15:2). After God told him that Eliezer would not be his heir, but one who would come from his own body, Abraham took Sarah's maid, Hagar, as his wife and bore Ishmael through her (Gen. 16:3). He was eighty-six years old at this time. For thirteen years Abraham believed that Ishmael would be his heir, but God appeared to him when he was ninety-nine years old and once more told him that he would have an heir, but it would be a child born to him through Sarah. Sarah later laughed at the idea that she could bear a child in her old age (Gen. 18:12). These events show just how real the struggle was for Abraham and Sarah. Abraham believed God, but he could not understand how God would fulfill His

promise. This was a major challenge to his faith. How many people would have given up on God because He does not work according to human time limits? Many people do. Dear reader, trust God. His answer to your prayers may not come as soon as you would like. The answer may not be that which your heart desires. His answer is always the best, and it comes at the very best time...His. Abraham had to wait for twenty-five years from the time God first promised he would have descendants until the time that God gave him Isaac, his true heir through Sarah. He was one hundred years old when Isaac was born. Through it all, he trusted God. Yes, he struggled. Yes, he tried to help God along. Yes, his humanity showed in his mistakes. Through it all, he never lost faith.

All of the previous tests of Abraham's faith pale in comparison with the test found in Genesis 22. The son of his old age, Isaac, was the hope that Abraham had longed for all of his life. He was the fulfillment of God's promise that he would have an heir. Through Isaac, God had promised to make of Abraham a great nation. Now, after all of this, God told Abraham to do something that would make the strongest man break down into a mass of quivering flesh. He commands Abraham to take Isaac to the land of Moriah and offer him as a burnt offering. As they ascended the mountain to make the sacrifice, Isaac bore upon his back the wood which, unbeknownst to him, is marked for his death. Abraham carried the fire for the sacrifice, and the knife with which he intended to kill his son. How every step must have been a burden for this father! How that blade must have burned into his flesh! How his heart must have groaned in despair as he watched his son by his side! He loved his son, but he loved God more. When Isaac asked of him, "Where is a lamb for a burnt offering?" he replied in faith, "God will provide." Hebrews 11:19 reveals that Abraham believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead. He was willing to offer his son, but his faith in God's promise was so strong that he counted on God to raise him from the dead. In the end, God delivered Abraham from offering his son. It was not God's intention for Abraham to kill his son. It was His intention to test his faith and prove that he was worthy. After all, this was the man who would father a nation, through which God would one day send His own Son to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world (John 3:16). Sometimes God's will conflicts with ours. Sometimes it requires sacrifice of us. When all is said and done, will you be faithful?