

ABRAHAM, OUR EXAMPLE OF FAITH

GALATIANS 3:6-7 • TV199B

A television broadcast sermon delivered
SUNDAY, JULY 31, 1983
By
HENRY T. MAHAN

Transcribed, edited and published
MAY 28TH, 2012

HENRY T. MAHAN TAPE LIBRARY
Zebulon Baptist Church
6088 Zebulon Highway
Pikeville, KY 41501

Galatians 3:6-7

“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.”

I want to make a few statements before I bring the message today. Our one concern is to glorify the heavenly Father and to preach the Gospel of his grace.

Next to that, our concern and desire is that you might come to know Christ as your Lord and Saviour, that you might hear the Gospel and have your heart opened by the Spirit of God to understand the Gospel, your ears opened to hear not just my words, but the Word of God in power, in conviction of the Holy Ghost and that your eyes of faith may be open to the behold the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour.

We are not in the religious con-game. We are not in religious promotion and entertainment, we are here to preach Christ and Him crucified. I am here to deal with the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are not begging for support. God will meet our needs and God will supply our needs according to his riches in glory through Jesus Christ.

ABRAHAM, OUR EXAMPLE OF FAITH

GALATIANS 3:6-7 • HENRY T. MAHAN

But, I am concerned for my generation; we are playing church. We have us a God that we have whittled out with our own pin-knives and we have concocted him in our own imagination. We have got as many different ways to God as there are preachers and people.

So little of the Word of God is being preached; we are entertaining people, we are promoting programs we are building schools. We are trying to straighten out the United State's Government.

We are trying to dry up all the liquor crowds and shut down all the dens of iniquity. Nobody is preaching the Gospel. I am determined, like Paul the apostle, *"I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified."*

Now, let the winds blow, let the tempter come, let people try to sidetrack us and divert our attention. I am going to keep doing what I have done through these 35 years; I am going to preach Christ.

If you will listen to this program, you are going to hear the Gospel. Today I am preaching from **Galatians 3, the 3rd chapter of Galatians**. Turn with me to **Galatians 3** and let me read two verses, **6 and 7**; now listen carefully, here is the subject: **"ABRAHAM, OUR EXAMPLE OF FAITH."**

We are going to learn something about faith. I am not just going to entertain you today; we are going to talk about the subject of faith. When I get through, if you will listen, you will learn something about faith, at least in your head whether you believe in your heart or not.

But, at least you will understand, should God be pleased to give you faith at a later date. You will have a foundation of the Word of God to base it on and the Word of God is the foundation of faith.

It says in **Galatians 3: 6 and 7**; *"Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness (before God, in the sight of God)."* He believed God. *"Know you therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."*

He is our example; he is our father in faith. *"He believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness"* and you will come the same way or you won't come at all.

If you will look at **Romans 4** you will see how that Abraham believed God, *"that God was able to do all that he had promised and it was imputed to him for righteousness."*

And Paul wrote; *"And this was written not for his sake alone that it was imputed to him for righteousness but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on him that raised Christ from the dead."*

Now, there is a lot of religion in the world today, just an awful lot of religion. There is a whole lot of preaching about faith; "keep the faith, have faith" and all of these different things.

ABRAHAM, OUR EXAMPLE OF FAITH

GALATIANS 3:6-7 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Usually, when men preach and talk about faith they wind up talking about Abraham, and rightly so, because Abraham is truly, according to the Scriptures, our example of faith. Let me show you that.

The first time that the word “*believe*” is used in the Bible, the first time now, you preachers, (if any of you are listening, you know something about the law of first mention). Well, the first time that the word “*believe*” is used in the Bible, it refers to Abraham.

The very first time when God uses the word “*believe*” in **Genesis 15:6**, God says; “*and Abraham believed in the Lord and it was counted to him for righteousness.*” That is the first time that salvation is dealt with on that principle of believing in the Lord and receiving, (because of it, righteousness in Christ) it is talking about Abraham.

Now, listen to this in **Romans 4:11**; it calls Abraham “*the father of all that believe,*” Abraham. In **Romans 4:12** it exhorts us to “*walk in the steps of our father Abraham.*”

So, when we preach about faith, we nearly have to go back and pick up Abraham because “*he is the father of the faithful*” and he is the example of faith.

The first time that God talks about believing, he talks about Abraham. He wasn't the first believer by any means. But, the first time that God talks about believing in the Bible, he talks about Abraham.

But, I can assure you of this that this faith of Abraham (which is our example) is a whole lot more than lip service. This faith of Abraham that brought righteousness before God was a whole lot more than lip service. “*You call me Lord, Lord, with your lips, but your heart is far from me.*”

It's a whole lot more than that. It's not just walking down an aisle on Sunday night while the choir sings, “Just as I Am” and saying “I believe in Jesus or I accept Jesus as my personal Saviour and calling him Lord with our lips” while our hearts are still in materialism and the world and in selfishness and self-righteousness. It is a whole lot more than that.

This faith of Abraham is a whole lot more than the observance of days set aside one day out of the week to act pious or set aside 10% of my income in order to gain God's blessings. It is a whole lot more than the observance of rituals, ceremonies, and Sabbath days.

In **Isaiah 1** our Lord said, “*Your new moons and your Sabbath's and your feasts are a trouble to me; they are an abomination to me. They are iniquity; away with them, away with them.*”

God is talking about all the observances of Sabbath days, new moons, Feast days, and rituals, and he says “*they are iniquity.*” When your heart is not in these things, do away with them.

This faith of Abraham is a whole lot more than doctrinal orthodoxy or outward reformation, the Pharisees were orthodox. Oh how orthodox they were; they were orthodox and dead, dead as a hammer. Saul of Tarsus was a moral man but an unrighteous man before God.

ABRAHAM, OUR EXAMPLE OF FAITH

GALATIANS 3:6-7 • HENRY T. MAHAN

So, this faith of Abraham is more than orthodoxy. It is more than fundamentalism. It is more than believing in the blood, the Book and the blessed hope. It is a whole lot more than lip service. It is a whole lot more than doing good works. It is a whole lot more than fasting, tithing, praying and doing good works.

Listen, the Pharisee said or prayed thus with himself; *“Lord, I fast, I tithe.”* He was making an effort to pray and *“I give alms to the poor.”* He was doing all of those things; he was fasting, praying, tithing and giving alms to the poor. Our Lord Jesus Christ left him unjustified, that is what he said; *“unjustified.”*

Saving faith; (now listen to me); saving faith, this faith of Abraham has something to do with God Himself, not just the things of God or the possessions of God. This thing of saving faith, this thing of the faith of Abraham, Abraham had none of this ritualism and no ceremonialism.

He had no cathedrals. He had no temples, no steeples, and he had no beads to count. He had none of these material things, no stained-glass windows, none of these things. He had no pin to wear in his lapel; he had none of these things; he believed God.

Do you see what I am getting at? He had none of the visual aids of religion; he believed God. This thing of saving faith, the faith of Abraham, it has something to do with God Himself as revealed in Christ.

This saving faith of Abraham, and we are told to *“walk in the steps of our father Abraham;”* we are told over here in my text, listen; it says, *“know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, (of saving faith), the same are the children of Abraham.”* And this thing has to do with God himself, the person of God, as revealed in Christ.

And it has something to do with the heart, not just the form, not just the ceremony, not just the outward deeds. This thing of faith has something to do with the heart; Abraham had none of these.

Abraham didn't go on a Thursday night visitation, no he didn't. Abraham didn't have a training union; he is out there in the desert. He is out there in the desert alone with God. Yet, he is called *“the example of faith.”* He is called the *“father of the faithful.”* He is called the *“example of the believer.”*

The very things that are written of him are the things that I want. It has to do with the heart and it has to do with the attitude, the attitude and conduct of the believer. It has to do with a living union.

“God spoke to Abraham face to face as a man with his friend.” He had a living, vital, personal, intimate union with the living God, not just with His associates. It was not just with His possessions but with God himself.

ABRAHAM, OUR EXAMPLE OF FAITH

GALATIANS 3:6-7 • HENRY T. MAHAN

We better get a hold of what I am talking about; we better get a hold of what I am talking about. We have mechanized faith; we have brought faith down from God clear down to the earth.

We have based it on human wisdom, how to do this, and we have all kind of books on how to do this and that, “How to be Baptized by the Holy Ghost,” “How to Win Souls” and “How to Lead the Victorious Life.” We have got God down here where any natural man can understand him.

But, this thing of saving faith, (if you will go back with me to the desert), you will see that man Abraham who was the friend of God. He was a man who walked with God, a man of whom God said over six thousand years ago, walked in faith. We are to, “*walk in the steps of Abraham,*” have the faith of Abraham.

He is the example of faith. I will tell you this about faith, I will tell you this about this saving faith, it is the work of God and it is the gift of God.

Now the Scripture says, “*For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves;*” faith is not of yourselves; “*it is the gift of God.*” The Scripture says, “*It is given unto you to believe.*”

Abraham was a miracle of God’s grace; that’s right! The gift of faith comes from God; “*Every good gift and perfect gift cometh from above. A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above.*”

“*Who made Abraham to differ?*” It was the same Lord who makes every man to differ. “*Who maketh thee to differ? What does thou have that thou didst not receive? It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.*”

Salvation is a work of God; “*salvation is of the Lord.*” This faith is the gift of God; it is a miraculous gift of God, a wonderful gift of God.

First of all: He is the source of faith.

Faith is not the product of the human heart. Faith doesn’t grow in the soil of human depravity, it comes from heaven and it is a gift of God.

Secondly: Faith is a living principle.

Faith is the single motive for all that a believer does, “*the just shall live by faith,*” by faith. He has hope because he believes and he believes God. Therefore, everything he does is motivated because everything that Abraham did, he did because he believed God.

It is a living principle; it is not just a dead, isolated, single act. Faith is not an isolated act. Men believe; they are believing and they shall believe; it is a living principle.

ABRAHAM, OUR EXAMPLE OF FAITH

GALATIANS 3:6-7 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Thirdly: Faith is not only a living principle but it is a producing principle; that's right, it is a producing principle.

It is not dormant, it is not dead but it actually produces that which glorifies God; true faith does. James says, "*Your faith without works is dead.*"

A man may say, "I believe in God" and yet he doesn't love God, he doesn't love the commandments of God, he doesn't love the Word of God, he doesn't love the people of God, he doesn't love the house of God, he doesn't love the fellowship of God, then "*he is a liar and the truth is not in him.*"

Because this faith, this gift of God, this living principle, is a producing principle and it produces the fruit of the spirit, "*love, joy, peace, kindness, meekness, gentleness,*" and all of these things that are glorifying to God.

It is a producing principle; that is exactly right! "*Show me your faith without your works.*" It cannot be done. "*I will show you my faith by my works.*" It is Christ that justifies the soul. It is works that justifies our faith.

Fourthly: Faith is a persevering principle.

It is of a persevering nature, it never quits, it continues until it gives way to reality. Faith continues until it gives way to reality. **Hebrews 3** says, "*We are of the house of Christ if we hold fast our confidence steadfast to the end.*" We are redeemed by the blood of Christ if "*we continue in faith.*"

You see, all these Old Testament believers died in faith. Paul said, "*The time of my departure is at hand; I have kept the faith. I have finished my course, henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day. Not me only, but all them that love his appearing.*"

So, I will tell you; this thing of faith does more than walk an aisle. It does more than accept Jesus as my personal Saviour. Anybody does that; anybody is a fool that doesn't do that, (if all the things they say are so), "just walk the aisle and go to heaven when you die."

"Accept Jesus as your personal Saviour and live in a mansion in the sweet, by and by." A man would be a fool not to take a preacher up on that.

But, this thing of living faith has to do with God. It has to do with the heart. It has to do with the attitude and conduct of a believer. It has to do with a living union; it has to do with a persevering, producing, principle in the heart.

Faith does more than just act religious on Sunday. It does more than set aside 10% for religious purposes. It does more than quit a few bad habits; saving faith believes God.

ABRAHAM, OUR EXAMPLE OF FAITH

GALATIANS 3:6-7 • HENRY T. MAHAN

It believes God in the sunshine and in the rain. It believes God in success or failure. It believes God in youth or in old age. It believes God in sickness or health. It believes God in life or death. Saving faith believes God.

Like Job said, *“The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”* It is like old Eli said, *“It’s the Lord; let him do what he will.”* It’s like Paul said, *“The Lord worketh all things after the council of his own will; praise ye the Lord.”* Faith believes God.

Faith loves the Lord God, loves him; it loves him with a genuine heart. Their faith walks with God. Faith glorifies God. Faith trusts God. Faith worships and praises God and faith dies believing God.

The hymn writer put it this way:

**“Oh for a faith that will not shrink
Though pressed by many a foe
That will not tremble on the brink of any earthly woe.**

**A faith that will not murmur or complain
Beneath God’s chastening rod
But in the hour of grief and pain
That faith will lean upon God.**

**Lord, give me such a faith as this!
Whatever may come I will taste even now
The happy bliss of thy eternal home.”**

In closing this message I want to give you five brief facts about Abraham’s faith. I have tried to show you from the Word of God that Abraham is an example of faith; Abraham our example of faith.

This faith is not a play-pretty; this faith is not just a religious idol; this is a living principle. This is a producing principle. This is a persevering principle. This is a heart attitude, a heart relationship in union with a living God. Come what may, I believe God, I believe God.

Now, Abraham had that faith; *“he believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”* Now, how do we know that Abraham believed God? How did Abraham know that he believed God? Huh? How did Abraham know that he believed God? How do you know that he believed God?

Well, his faith was revealed by trial, that’s right, by trial. Trials don’t produce faith, trials reveal faith. In the many trials of Abraham, we see his faith loud and clear.

ABRAHAM, OUR EXAMPLE OF FAITH

GALATIANS 3:6-7 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Let me give you five of them briefly:

First of all: Abraham's faith separated him from unbelievers; that's right! In **Genesis 12:1**, the Lord God said to Abraham; "*Get thee out of thy country, from thy kindred, from thy father's house to a land that I will show thee. So, Abraham departed.*"

Now, Abraham's father and all of his kin-folks and all the people of his tribe were idolaters. That's right; they were not worshipping God, not down at Ur of the Chaldees; they were idolaters. You can read that in the Scriptures; they worshipped false gods.

God came to Abraham and said, "You have to separate yourself from these idolaters and these unbelievers and go to a land that I will show thee." So, Abraham left. Abraham could find no fellowship and no peace among people who did not worship the living God.

Let me show you something: When a man or a woman today comes to saving faith in Jesus Christ, if he comes to true faith, in the true Christ, and his heart and life is changed by the grace of God, he is going to experience some division and problems with his former associates and with his family and with his relatives who do not believe.

I will show you that in **Matthew 10:32-34**; our Lord said, "*Whosoever shall confess me before men, him I will confess before my father which is in heaven. But, whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my father.*"

"Think not that I am come to send peace on this earth. I came not to send peace but a sword for I am come to set a man at variance (odds) with his father and a daughter against her mother and a daughter in law against her mother in law."

"A man's enemy shall be they of his own household. But he that loveth kindred, father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, more than me, is not worthy of me."

True faith will stand against any opposition. Come apart, be ye separate. "*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?*"

And what will happen, if you come to true saving faith, in a true, living, Christ, and believe the principles of the Word, you are going to have some trouble, some division, some opposition.

What you have to do is leave it, depart from it, just like Abraham did. He was nearly 75 years old. He lived there all of his life. You might say, "I can't leave my friends and family, I have to stay here." Faith believes God and takes sides with God against anyone.

Secondly: Abraham's faith delivered him from selfishness.

ABRAHAM, OUR EXAMPLE OF FAITH

GALATIANS 3:6-7 • HENRY T. MAHAN

In **Genesis 13**, if you will read it, Abraham's nephew Lot was with him. God blessed them both; they became very rich. They had a lot of cattle, oxen, and sheep, goats, and all of these animals.

After a while, they both got so prosperous that their servants began to have conflict. Abraham said, "We are brothers; let's don't have conflict."

He stood one day and he told Lot; now he said, "Lot; you pick out any land you want. I don't care where it is; you pick it out and you can have it, you can have it. You go that way and I will go whatever way opposite from where you choose."

Now, Abraham could have pulled rank on Lot. He could have said, "Now son; I am the oldest and I am your elder. I am the leader of this outfit so I will just take the preferred land and give you what's left."

The faith of God had delivered Abraham from selfishness and grief. That old man could stand there and tell Lot "pick out any land you want and I will take what is left."

And of course, Lot did what most of us would have done, he took the well-watered plains. He took the "bottom forty" and left Abraham the mountains.

But Abraham, in giving Lot his choice, fulfilled the purpose of God for himself. Yet, he showed his faith in God to supply his need; "*true faith does not seek her own;*" true faith depends on God.

Another illustration of this when he looked to God to supply his needs was:

Lot and the kings of Sodom were captured and taken off by wicked kings. Abraham took 318 men and rescued them. He was bringing them back and the kings of Sodom said to Abraham; "*Now Abraham, you take all the gold and silver and all the jewels and all the precious stones and all of these other things, you take them and we will just take the people.*"

Listen to Abraham: Abraham looked at that old, wicked, king, and said; "*you listen to me; I have lifted my hand to the Lord, the most high God, the possessor, the owner of heaven and earth. I have looked to God.*"

"*I will not take anything from you lest you say I have made Abraham rich.*" If Abraham is rich God will make him rich. That is faith; that is faith!

True faith looks to God for salvation. True faith looks to God for health. True faith looks to God for every need. True faith looks to God for protection. True faith believes this verse of Scripture, **Philippians 4:19**, "*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*"

Our God cares how you acquire your possessions; he cares how you get them. Our God cares how you look upon those possessions; "*the love of money is the root of evil.*"

ABRAHAM, OUR EXAMPLE OF FAITH

GALATIANS 3:6-7 • HENRY T. MAHAN

And our God cares how you use your possessions, but faith looks squarely at all these material things. Abraham, they had piled out there in front of him, the wealth of Solomon, the wealth of that world.

And he said; "*Abraham take it.*" He said, "I don't want it, I don't want it. I have lifted my hand to God and it is an empty hand and God will fill it and I am trusting him." Are you trusting God? That is faith and it waits on the Lord.

And I will tell you another thing; his faith was willing to part with his works and look to grace alone.

One of the hardest trials he had was when God came to him and said, "*Put Ishmael out.*" Now you know that Hagar was the bond-woman who represents the law and Ishmael is the bond-woman's son who represents our fleshly works.

Abraham was the one who brought that fellow into the world, contrary to God's commandment, and God said, "*He has to go.*" When he is 14 years old Abraham took him and put a bottle of water on his mother's shoulder and kissed him goodbye.

Because Isaac represents grace and Ishmael represents works and Abraham knew that grace and works can't thrive and exist together, so works has to go.

And with all the pain it caused him, he put Ishmael out and kept Isaac alone, the son of the promise, the son of grace, the son of God's sovereign power, to be his heir.

Last of all, his faith yielded to God the most prized possession, his son. God came to him and said, "*Abraham; take that son, thine only son whom thou lovest to Mount Mariah and sacrifice him as a burnt offering to me.*"

Abraham departed and he didn't question him. He didn't argue against God; he believed God; he believed God. God said that his seed would be through Isaac and Isaac would be his heir and he believed God.

He knew that if he killed him that God would raise Isaac from the dead. But, he withheld not his only son and God said; "*I know now that you love me because you have not withheld from me your only son.*"

If you love God your prized possession will not be withheld from him because he loved you and didn't withhold his prized possession, his only begotten Son.

Faith, faith!