

Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

Series: *Covenant: God's Way of Relationship*



A Teaching Sermon: “The Faith of Abraham: The Covenant of Promise, Part Two”
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Live Teleconference July 19, 2020

Abram had delivered his nephew Lot, slaying the kings of the plains. He then refused to accept offerings from the king of Sodom lest he should say that the king had made Abram rich (Genesis 14.23).

After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward. (Genesis 15.1)

Now a covenant already existed between God and Abram because of the calling and promise recorded in Genesis 12. Here the Covenant Lord reveals who He is in the covenant. The LORD is Abram's shield. He is Abram's exceeding great reward. He is, indeed, everything in the covenant. He gives man everything. He is the Source of security and the treasure. He is the Source and Supplier of all Life and Blessing. He is the One who makes rich. He is the reward. He is the unfailing presence with the father of the faithful (Romans 4.12), not for any effort, work, accrued merit, or particular service, but simply because it pleased the LORD of the covenant.

The noun *magen* (pronounced maw-gane') refers to an object which provides covering and protection to the body during warfare. This particular word refers to a smaller and more common type of round shield carried by light infantry and officers. It is also used figuratively of princes as protectors of the realm (Psalm 89.18; 47.9; Hosea 4.18). It may also mean "suzerain" and imply the giver of gifts, the benefactor (from the suzerain's viewpoint). (TWOT, Volume I, p. 269)

God often reveals His character, who He is, through His Names. With this revelation from God, Abram will become noteworthy for his faith. He believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness. (Romans 4:3-11) He is called “the father of all them that believe.” In fact, three religions look to Abraham as their spiritual father: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Paul references Abraham's faith many times, not only in Romans chapter four, but also in Galatians 3. James used his example to illustrate saving faith in James 2:21-23. The origin of this is found in Genesis 15:6:

“And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” (cf. Romans 4:3, James 2:23)

What can we say about the faith of Abraham?

I. Abraham's faith was based on revelation.

God revealed Himself to Abraham:

1. In Ur of the Chaldees - [Ac 7:2-4](#); [Gen 15:7](#)
2. At Haran of Mesopotamia - [Gen 12:1-4](#)
3. At Shechem in Canaan - [Gen 12:6-7](#)

4. After Lot moved to Sodom - [Gen 13:14-17](#)
5. And many times more - cf. [Gen 15:1-17](#); [17:1-27](#); [18:1-33](#);
[22:1-19](#) [Executable Outlines, Copyright © Mark A. Copeland, 2016](#)

By means of revelation of Himself, God provided the basis for Abraham's faith and trust. When we have a situation, a problem, a temptation to drift, doubt, disbelieve, and disobey, we can pray and ask the Living God to grant us a revelation of Himself. This is the aim of fasting. This is the thing that will meet our need. There are hundreds of names of God. The idea is: because God is __[my shield and exceeding great reward]_____, I can obey through faith which works by love. He protects me, provides for me, and rewards me with Himself, with knowing Him, the I AM THAT I AM.

And this is eternal life, that they might know You, the one, the only, true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent. John 17:3

Likewise, our faith must be based upon revelation. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). These things were written that we might believe in God and that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, God the Son. We must believe in Jesus, believe Jesus, and believe what Jesus believes. God is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. The main purpose of fasting, for example, is that God would reveal to us who He is, who Jesus is, and who is the Holy Spirit. The main way God communicates to us is through His Word; we must be receptive and receive His Word, believing.

II. Abraham demonstrated his faith by obedience.

Abraham obeyed God by faith. Faith is the gift of God, not of works. We demonstrate our faith through our obedience to the faith. By faith, believing God, Abraham left his country, sojourned in a foreign land, offered his son Isaac. (Hebrews 11:8-10; Hebrews 11:17; James 2:21-24).

Abraham's faith was not a dead faith, but rather a dynamic faith expressing itself in obedience. (James 2:20, 26). **Only *he* who believes is obedient, and only *he* who is obedient believes."** (Dietrich Bonhoeffer). So we obey what we believe.

Do we believe the gospel of Jesus Christ? The gospel calls for obedience to the faith (Romans 1:5; Romans 16:25, 26). We obey from the heart with a hearty reliance and supreme attachment to Jesus Christ, a supreme loyalty to Christ. We are to have a faith that works through love (Galatians 5:6). We are not saved by works of righteousness, but according to God's mercy. He saved us. God initiates relationship through Covenant. We love because He first loved us. We love because Jesus Christ demonstrated God's love in giving Himself as a sacrifice for our sin, bearing the curse, the penalty, and the liability for sin; bearing the wrath of God. Those who do not obey the gospel are warned, for example, in 1 Peter 4:17 and in 2 Thess. 1:7-9:

7 and to give you who are troubled ^hrest with us when ⁱthe Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, **8** in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** ^jThese shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

III. Abraham trusted God and believed God.

Abraham's faith and his resulting obedience demonstrated that he trusted in God, he trusted God, he believed in the LORD. God was pleased with the fact that Abraham believed Him. His faith was accounted to him as righteousness. Abraham was not justified because of his works. He was declared justified and declared blameless because of his faith.

“Though he had a faith that works, he did not trust in his works; rather in God who justifies the ungodly” (cf. Ro 4:5-8)

Likewise, we are called to place our trust in Jesus Christ for eternal life and not in anything we have done. We do not place our trust in our obedience. Salvation cannot be earned, nor is it deserved. Trusting in Jesus Christ alone and only for our salvation, for eternal life, is what saves someone. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, who is eternal, infinite, and holy. Grace means that salvation is a gift. So is faith. God through Christ justifies the ungodly. To be sons of Abraham we must have the same kind of faith as did Abraham. Salvation is not guaranteed because of being a physical descendant of Abraham. We are talking about spiritual matters, things unseen, things eternal.

IV. Abraham's faith was dynamic, at times faltering and at times resolute.

Abraham was not perfect. He had Sarah his wife tell a half-truth to save his own life (Genesis 12:11-20; 20:1-18). He questioned God when he and Sarah did not have children (Genesis 15:2, 3). He succumbed to using Hagar as a surrogate (Genesis 16:1-4). When he thought it impossible for he and Sarah to have children, he offered an alternative to God (Genesis 17:17, 18). But Romans 4:18-22 tells us plainly:

[Abraham] who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, “So shall your descendants be.” And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform, and therefore, “it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

God only recognized Isaac as Abraham's only son because of the covenant. When Abraham was called to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, Abraham did so willingly, having faith that God could raise Isaac from the dead. (Hebrews 11:17-19).

Abraham in James 2:23 is called “a friend of God.” Amazing. Abraham was kept by the power of God. The promise to Abraham was that he would be the heir of the world through faith according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the descendants. Abraham believed God who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did. This is righteousness by imputation. God declared Abraham righteous.

Sinners are saved by grace; declared righteous, having the perfection of Jesus Christ imputed to them when faith and trust are put in Christ alone for salvation, for eternal life. After that act, we have times when our faith goes right out the bottom of our feet and other times when we have resolve and courageous confidence. Being declared righteous, the believer becomes what God has declared him to be. Justified by Jesus Christ and His redeeming work in our behalf, we experience the impartation of righteousness as the Holy Spirit and the Word of God sanctify us, preparing us to live with a holy God who loves us. We grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We mature and come **“to real obedience to Christ when he calls us to follow him; for in Jesus the law is at once fulfilled and cancelled.”** (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Our faith will grow when we are willing to “walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had” (Romans 4:12). With the revelation of God, His Word, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and receptive hearts and repentance, by grace, we will see our perilous position...

Salvation in a Sentence

- By grace ([Ephesians 2.8, 9](#); [Titus 3.5](#); [Romans 6.23](#))
- you see your true condition; ([Romans 3.23](#); [Proverbs 14.12](#))
- understand the nature of God ([1 John 1:1-5](#); [1 John 4.8-10](#); [Isaiah 6.3](#); [Exodus 34.7](#); [Psalm 89.23](#))
- and who Jesus is and what He did; ([John 1.1,14](#); [John 3.16](#); [Isaiah 53](#); [Acts 2.36](#); [Romans 8-11](#))
- perceive the need to repent of sin, believe in Jesus and His word that He died to pay the penalty for your sin and rose from the dead; ([1 Corinthians 15.3, 4](#); [John 5.39,40](#))
- receive Him as Savior, Lord, and Master, ([John 1.12](#); [Luke 16.13](#); [Acts 4.12](#); [1 John 5.11-13](#))
- to follow Him in full trust, reliance, and confidence ([Luke 12.31, 32](#))
- and receive the free gift of eternal life ([John 6.47](#); [John 17.3](#); [1 John 5.10-13](#)).

With saving faith, a gift of grace, the gift of God, we will be as those who are of faith, being the sons of Abraham. We will be blessed along with believing Abraham. We will receive of the promise made to Abraham. (Galatians 3:7-9)

"In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." ([Gen 18:18](#))

May the grace and blessing of the Covenant Lord be with you,

Mary Craig

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"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."
Revelation 21:7

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