



CHRIST CENTRED • SPIRIT FILLED • BIBLE BASED

BELLVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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The Faith of Abraham

Genesis 12: 1 - 9

Romans 4: 13 - 15

John 8: 51 - 58

~ Brent Russell ~

- Many people have spent a great deal of time energy effort and money to trace their family tree
- They trace back through preceding generations of people
- Parents, grandparents, great grandparents
- Sometimes people are surprised by those they find in their family tree
- Thieves, prostitutes all sorts of unsavory characters
- But all part of who we are none-the-less
- So to we have a spiritual family tree
- Something that runs back through the ages back to Christ
- A family tree of all sort of people from all walks of life
- But people who none the less passed onto us something of their faith
- People who loved Jesus and who passed that love onto us

- I remember when I came to faith in my confirmation classes
- It was a young youth minister like myself who managed to share something of Jesus love for me
- He managed to allow me to be open to God and to finally come to a saving knowledge of Jesus
- He in some sense was a spiritual father to me
- And someone somewhere else passed faith onto him
- And so we all form part of this rich Christian family tree
- And as we trace our family tree back we in fact find we are all descendants of Abraham
- The father of many nations he is called
- We all remember the great youth song father Abraham had many sons
- Well Paul writes that we are all children of Abraham
- In Genesis we read about God's call to Abraham
- Come follow me
- I will give you your land
- I will bless you
- You will be a blessing to all the nations of the earth

- God called Abraham and made a covenant with him
- A covenant that finds it's final and fullest expression in the Gospel of Jesus

- It is in the good news of Jesus expressing God's grace to us that we find the fullness of the promise given to Abraham
- The promise given to Abraham
- Given to his offspring - the Jews
- And given to those who call upon His God - The Gentiles

- All of these become heirs to the promise

- They receive the call that Abraham was given
- Because they inherit the promise from him
- In the same way that biological genes are passed from one generation to another
- So to these spiritual promises are passed on to all those who are called sons and daughters of Abraham

- But who is to be called Abrahams offspring?
- Paul writes in vs 16 that "Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham."
- Abrahams offspring are both those who are of the law - i.e. the Jews
- But also to the non-Jews who follow Abrahams faith
- If we go back to vs 12 it is clear that even for Jews it is only those who walk in the footsteps of Abraham for who the promise is true
- So for both Jew and non-Jew it is faith - not obedience to the law that defines how good you are in God's sight
- And it is not obedience to the law that determines whether you belong to the promise

- So we must be quite clear about what Paul is saying
- We all fall into one of two camps
- Those under law
- Those under grace
- And the sad reality is there are many even in the church who have not yet moved from law to grace
- There are those who have never inherited the promise that was given to Abraham
- So how do we know what it is to be under law or to be under grace
- How do we tell if we are under wrath or under righteousness

- This is not a check list for you to look at others and to determine whether they are holy or not
- This is a list for you to re-evaluate your own spiritual journey
- This is so that we all can make sure that we are not trying to live by the law - but trying to live by the grace which God has poured out on us

Those under the Law

- Come to church because of a sense of duty - it is the right thing to do, my spouse forced me to be here
- Give money because of a sense of guilt - God will judge me if I don't give money to the church
- Are reliant on themselves for all that they do "God help him what helps himself" - it's NOT in the bible
- Are caught up only with intellectual knowledge of God without any desire to turn that knowledge into Christian action
- Try and live right lives because they are scared of God's punishment if they do wrong
- Are religious not because of a love for heaven but because of a fear of hell
- People under the law see the church as a place of judgment, fear, boredom and duty
- People under the law simply do not understand that they are in the presence of a living God who loves and desires to be loved in return

Those under grace

- If we read from vs 18 we see in Abrahams live a blueprint of a life lived by faith - not by the law
- Hope - Abraham hoped for things that he could not see
- Belief - he believed in things that seemed impossible
- Looked at facts but still believed - he was realistic - looking at the realities of the problems but still trusted in God
- Gave glory to God - in Good times and bad under trial and in blessing Abraham gave glory to God

- People who live under grace
- Come to church despite the fact that they know that they don't deserve to be in God's presence
- Give money willingly to God's ministry out of what they do not have because they know that God will use it to bless others more needy than them
- Are totally dependant on God because they realize that in them selves there is nothing that they can do that God would call good
- Love God and desire to know all they can about him that they might understand the one they love better and better
- Try to live holy lives and yet fail miserably - as Paul writes the things I want to do I don't yet the things I don't want to do I land up doing
- People who are living under grace come to church not because they are scared of God and fear his condemnation - but rather because they love Him and want to be touched by him
- People who live by faith are realistic about the questions they have of a mysterious God
- They understand the difficulties of life and yet cling tenaciously to that faith - Like a demon possessed boys dad who shouts I believe I believe help my unbelief

- People under grace understand that there is no easy fix to life's problems
- They understand that there is know sequence of laws or actions that one can do that will guarantee perfection in this life
- People under grace simply understand as did Abraham that it is not about them - it is all about Him
- A husband and wife didn't really love each other. The man was very demanding, so much so that he prepared a list of rules and regulations for his wife to follow. He insisted that she read them over every day and obey them to the letter. Among other things, his "do's and don'ts" indicated such details as what time she had to get up in the morning, when his breakfast should be served, and how the housework should be done. After several long years, the husband died. As time passed, the woman fell in love with another man, one who dearly loved her. Soon they were married. This husband did everything he could to make his new wife happy, continually showering her with tokens of his appreciation. One day as he was cleaning house, she found tucked away in a drawer the list of commands her first husband had drawn up for her. As she looked it over, it dawned on her that even though her present husband hadn't given her any kind of list, she was doing everything her first husband's list required anyway. She realized she was so devoted to this man that her deepest desire was to please him out of love, not obligation.

- Those under law are focused on their own strength their own experience, their own knowledge their own righteousness
- They live out of a sense of duty and obligation

- Those under *God's* grace are so awed and humbled by a mighty *God* who loves them that they understand there is nothing that *God* wants from them
- Other than these two things
- To believe in *Jesus*
- And to Love *God* with all their heart, mind, soul and strength
- According to a 3rd century rabbi, *Moses* gave 365 prohibitions and 248 positive commands. *David* reduced them to 11 in Psalm 15. *Isaiah* made them 6 (*Isaiah* 33:14, 15). *Micah* 6:8 binds them into 3 commands. *Habbakuk* reduces them all to one great statement: The just shall live by faith.
- *Abraham* understood that *God* is not a *God* of do's and don'ts
- But a *God* who simply wants us to have faith in Him