

**How's Your Faith?
Faith's Source for Help**

KSBC 06/29/08

Genesis 14

INTRO How's your faith? This is an important question. Without faith it is not possible to please God. The true believer in Christ is to live their life by faith in him. Faith is that which connects you to confidence, assurance and strength in God.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.
Galatians 2:20

We have been learning from Abram's life of faith that there are several possible answers to the question 'How's your faith?' You could answer that your faith is just beginning or that it is being challenged. You could answer that you are a bit embarrassed because you have been caught living for personal safety, possessions or your rights, rather than by faith. Another answer might be that you are experiencing a joy in the midst of challenges that you never thought possible because you have been listening and talking to God in regular times of worship.

Many of you know John Pirolo and the challenges he has faced in the past year. After mentioning him and Monica in last week's sermon, he and I had lunch together this past week. He later sent me an email with his answer to the question 'How's your faith?' Here is what he said . . .

Did you notice in John's answers the reference to help? The help from his family, friends, church family and the help from God's promises have all contributed to his growing, joyful faith.

Who do you rely on for help to live by faith? Where do you turn for help, grace, mercy or endurance to live by faith? Do you have a helper? I read the following sentence in a book by Paul Tripp this past week . . .

In a fallen world there is a powerful pressure to constrict your life to the shape and size of your life.

When you are challenged or overwhelmed to shrink your worldview to self preservation, pleasure, happiness, success or a hassle free life, where do you go for help to live big in faith for God?

Abram's story in Genesis 14 reveals another marker or lesson about living by faith. Everyone who lives by faith needs a helper. There are no exceptions.

Read Genesis 14

Abram's faith challenged.	14:1-16
Abram's faith helped.	14:17-24

Priest. What comes to your mind when you consider the term 'priest?' We do not know much about Melchizedek other than what is recorded in these verses. The Psalmist in 110:4 and the author of Hebrews on several occasions connect the priesthood of Melchizedek with Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is a priest like Melchizedek. The book of Hebrews points out various ways that Jesus is a priest like Melchizedek, but we want to take special notice of the priestly role of providing the necessary help for the one living by faith.

A priest is a helper. A priest stands between the person of faith and God to bring them together and help the person of faith please God.

Note the role that Melchizedek played in the Abram story. After this incredible victory, Melchizedek, a 'priest of God' shows up to support, bless, encourage and provoke Abram's faith. His appearance contrasts with the offer from the King of Sodom who represents the mainstream response of the world, to the winner goes the spoils.

Note the description of Jesus our High Priest in Hebrews 4:16 and following into chapter five. His role is to help us in our time of need. As our Priest he is 'appointed to represent us in matters related to God.' Note 5:10 of Hebrews where it is written that Jesus 'was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.' Jesus is our eternal, designated by God high priest to help us in all matters related to pleasing and trusting God. What Melchizedek was symbolically, Jesus is in actual truth and reality.

Who is your priest? Abram had Melchizedek come to his aid after a draining battle. You have Jesus, the son of God as your priest helper. He is greater than Melchizedek in many ways. Your faith helper should be Jesus. He is your faith coach. He is your high priest. A life of faith that is not Jesus saturated is a life that is boring and wearisome. It is the staleness of life lived in the constrictions of the felt and the visible.

Comparing the priesthoods of Melchizedek and Jesus, we learn that the type of help faith requires is exactly the help Jesus provides.

Your faith requires help, found only in Jesus, that . . .

1. Identifies with the sufferer.

Note that Melch was a King in a narrative that uses the term 'king' 28 times in 24 verses. He was king of a city/state in a territory where kings were divided into warring coalitions. Did he understand what Abram was facing? Was he sympathetic to the concerns of power and terror? It seems safe to assume that he was.

Note the description of our great high priest Jesus in Hebrews 4:15.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet without sin.

- Jesus suffers together with people of faith in their trial.
- Jesus brings active help as one who is experienced in trials.

Illus Lane p.76

2. Provides immediate access to God.

Note that Melch cared for physical needs with a banquet celebration, blessed Abram by directing him to the greatness and special promises of God and then reminded him that God's hand had just delivered Abram from his enemies. This strengthens and prompts Abram to clearly stand by faith against the enticements of the King of Sodom (v.22).

Melch connected Abram to God and his greatness at a crucial time in Abrams faith journey.

Note the access to God granted by Jesus, our great high priest in Hebrews 4:16.

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

- Access to God in prayer
- Access to God's promises. H 6:16-20
- Access to God by priestly intercession. H 7:25

Illus throne of grace

3. Draws and prompts our worship.

Note that whatever Melch did in appearing and speaking to Abram, it prompted a response of costly worship from him. The helping ministry of the priest stirred the heart of the one helped to devote generous worship toward the priest . . . which set a direction for his response to the offer of wealth from the world.

Note how Jesus help as priest draws us to respond to God in worship.

Cf. H 7:26 – 'exalted above the heavens'
10:21-22 – 'since we have a great priest . . . '

- Jesus help prompts us to draw near to God.
- Jesus help motivates us to not give up.
- Jesus help pushes us encourage others.

Illus tithing/giving

4. Completely covers our sins.

Note that Melch does not address this but Jesus as the complete and eternal high priest does. Abram has no assurance of complete and ultimate forgiveness of his sin at this point in his faith journey that we are aware of.

Note that high priest Jesus provides payment for sins once for all as he offered himself as a sacrifice.

Cmp. H 5:1-3 with 7:26-27

H 7:25 – *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him'*

How do you access the help of high priest Jesus?

Like Abram . . . help for your faith comes from Jesus as you make . . .

- daily choices to listen and talk to God in humble worship.
- special choices to honor God and his promises over worldly alternatives.
- difficult choices to obey in challenging situations.

Get some help from High Priest Jesus . . .

1. Repent of your sinful attempts at living by faith by yourself. You maintain a form of religion but choose to consistently refuse God's help in Jesus.
2. Purpose to rediscover the truth about Jesus as your helper priest. Read and think on his life, his words, his compassion, his power, his death, his resurrection, his coming, ect.
3. Humbly cry out to God for help as you read and memorize Hebrews 4:14-16.