

## How's Your Faith? Faith and Change

KSBC 07/20/08

Genesis 17

**INTRO** How's your faith? Or better phrased for our study today, how is your faith changing? Have any of your ideas or behaviors related to your faith actually changed recently?

This past week I received some attachments on email that required some extra attention as they were written in MS Word 07 and I have 03 on my computer. Having a version of something that has been upgraded, reformatted, improved and enhanced is a concept we can easily connect with. As someone who used an IBM selectric type writer to get through college, I do appreciate the various upgrades represented by the shift to MS Word 07.

The question of the morning then is 'what version of faith are you operating with today?' How long since it has been upgraded or improved? In some religious circles, having a faith that never changes is highly valued. Let's ask God to help us evaluate clearly and respond courageously as we examine our faith for changes, upgrades or improvements. God certainly was actively involved in upgrading Abraham's faith at various intervals while preparing him for the work God had set him aside to accomplish for heaven's purposes.

We have been tracking along with Abram since he first heard a call from God to follow him by faith. What God has chosen to do through Abraham is huge. What God is doing in Abraham is just as significant.

Through Abraham, God has continued the promise of rescue for mankind that began in Genesis 3:15 and most recently appeared in Noah's blessing of Shem in 9:27. God has determined to bless all peoples through Abraham. All that we understand about faith in Jesus Christ and the incredible benefits that are ours in Christ can be traced back to these promises made by God to bless and protect Abraham.

As important as the covenant that God makes with Abraham is, we are focusing in these studies on learning from Abraham's experience with God of living by faith. We are now at least 23 years into Abraham and Sarah's faith experience as recorded in these chapters in Genesis. It has been that long since God invaded their lives and told them to follow him. They have had incredible highs and a few embarrassing lows along the way. The stretch of 13 years between the stumbling of the Hagar story in 16 and the beginning of the events of 17 would appear to indicate a stability and growth in their faith as they wait on the Lord in obedience. Now about a year before the promise of a son is fulfilled, God appears to clarify and confirm himself and his promises to this couple walking in faith. God appears with an upgraded version of the covenant he initiated with Abraham over 20 years earlier.

<b>Read Genesis 17</b>	God appears to Abram	1-3
	Faith responsibilities outlined	4-22
	Abraham responds	23-27

### **Key Bible themes found in Genesis 17:**

- Expansion of God's blessing to nations and kings.
- The faith of Abraham/children of Abraham
- Sign and seal of faith; circumcision and baptism
- Continuation of God's redemptive plan

Chapter 17 allows us to watch Abraham respond as God reveals some deeper and extended implications connected to his experience of faith. Abraham's faith must be upgraded and change so that God's purposes and glory will be fulfilled in his life. Let's examine and consider two ways our faith is challenged to change using Abraham's experience with God as our pattern.

### **1. Your appreciation for God will change.** 'as for me' 4

In confirming his covenant with Abraham, God reveals more of himself and his plans. He shows a bit more of who he is and what he is doing than Abraham had understood until now. Your appreciation for God grows as you discover that . . .

- God is greater than you once thought he was.

Progression of names for God to God as 'God Almighty' – El Shaddai

14:18-20 God most high; 15:1 your shield; 15:7 the Lord/sovereign

16:13 God who sees 17:1 God Almighty

- God is doing greater things than you once thought he was. V.2, 7, 17

Abraham grew in his understanding of what God was planning and doing through him and Sarah. This is summarized in God's declaration in v7 that he will be your God.

Many nations and kings, everlasting promises, descendants and generations, inclusion of plans for Sarah and Ishmael

Illus. your names for God                      your worship practices                      Psa.86:10-11

### **2. Your perspective of yourself will change.** 'as for you' 9

In giving these promises to Abraham, God stated in clear terms Abraham's responsibilities to be loyal to God. A covenant relationship with God requires an obedient, life changing response from a person. Your perspective of yourself should change as your faith grows in these ways . . .

- Commitment                      v9 you must keep my covenant; v1 'walk before me'

Walk before me is a clear call to living every aspect of life under the gaze of God

- Integrity                      v1 blameless; 11 sign of the covenant

Wholeness, union of life and faith – physical sign points to loyalty to cov't;  
Clear up issues with Sarai and Ishmael

- Satisfaction                      v.10 this is what I have made/given you; name changes;  
specific promises re Isaac

Finding your deepest satisfaction in being used for God's greater purposes

Illus sons of Abraham . . . John 8:39 ff . . . truth, love, hear . . .contrast w/you do not hear

**Take Aways . . .**

1. Reflect over the last 13 years of your life, how has your faith changed?
2. Identify and praise God for the changes in your faith that are pleasing to Him.
3. Reflect and repent over the shallowness and immaturity of your faith.
4. By faith, become a child of Abraham today. Rom 4:20-25