

25-0831a Transcript

25-0831a - *Abrams' faith, Steve Cain*

Bible Readers: Kevin Woosley and Roger Raines

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Abrams' faith

Transcript (0:04 - 39:43)

Scripture Readings

1st Reading (0:04 - 0:59): Kevin Woosley

James 1:2-8: (0:04) Good morning. I'll be reading out of the book of James, chapter 1, verses 2 through 8. (0:15) My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing (0:22) of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and (0:30) complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all (0:38) liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to you. Let him ask in faith with no doubting, (0:47) for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man (0:53) suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all (0:59) his ways.

2nd Reading (1:05 - 1:48): Roger Raines

James 2:14-17: James 2, 14 and 17. What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but has no (1:16) works, and that faith fails him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily (1:24) food, and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and be filled, and yet you do not give (1:33) them what is necessary for their body? What use is that? Even so, faith, if it has no works, (1:43) it's dead, dead by itself. This concludes this reading. (1:48)

Transcript

Preacher: Steve Cain

(1:53) We're going to be talking about faith. It's important for us to be able to recognize (1:59) what faith, the Bible talks about as faith, and whether or not we have that faith ourselves or (2:07) not.

We're going to focus in on God helping Abraham develop the faith that he applauds (2:15) and that he credits as righteousness. I like starting out my lessons with asking a question, (2:24) and the question is usually answered in Hebrews, the 11th chapter, and it's usually verse 6. (2:31) Verse 6, what pleases God? So as you reflect upon that, what pleases God? And the Hebrew writer (2:47) points out to us what pleases God in chapter 11 with verse 6, and I put my glasses on so I can (2:55) read it beautifully. Let's look at verse 5, because that's part of the paragraph.

We're (3:02) talking about context. By faith Enoch was taken from this life so that he did not experience (3:09) death. He could not be found because God had taken him away.

For before he was taken, (3:16) he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith, it is

impossible to please God, (3:27) because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly (3:34) seek him. So what pleases God? Believe that he is, and that he's a rewarder of those who (3:43) diligently seek him.

So if we believe that he is, that requires us to have faith that God does (3:49) exist, and it's important for us to come to that. And so the Hebrew writer starts out by describing (3:59) faith, the faith that is biblical, starting with verse 1, chapter 11. (4:08) Now I'm reading from the New International Version just in case anybody is asking, because (4:14) that's the version I like to read from anyway.

Now, faith is confidence of what we hope for (4:25) and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. (4:33) So faith is described as having confidence in what we are hoping for.

What is it that we're (4:41) hoping for? This is another sermon in and of itself, and I'm just going to use it as a (4:46) jumping off point. What is faith that we are, what are we hoping for? Well, I believe that (4:55) each one of you who are here this morning are hoping for a life with God eternally, (5:04) that when the end of the world comes and judgment day comes, we will be found faithfully, (5:09) and that we will be found without spot and without blemish, which God has offered to us (5:15) and is offering to whoever will come to Him through Jesus, that Jesus' sacrifice will cleanse (5:21) us of our sins, and that Jesus can present us before Him without spot and without blemish. (5:27) That's our faith.

That's our hope. And we're hoping that that will come to pass. (5:33) And we're being assured that that is going to be the case, because God is promising us that (5:39) promise, making that promise to us, and God cannot lie, can He? And He's going to make that (5:46) promise come to pass, and with the help of Jesus and Jesus' grace, we're going to be able to (5:54) anticipate being with God eternally in heaven.

That's our hope. So faith is confidence in what (6:01) we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were committed for.

(6:10) So as we reflect upon the hope and upon faith in particular, (6:18) I would like for us to take a look at the passage that was just read by Brother Rod here (6:24) in James, the second chapter. And so as we reflect upon that, I'm going to read a little bit further (6:37) though in the context, but I'm going to reread what Brother Roger pointed out to us. Again, (6:44) I'm going to be reading from the New International Version.

(6:48) But good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds. (6:57) Focus in on that word, deeds. What is he talking about? Is he talking about us giving to the poor? (7:04) Is he talking about us going to the nursing homes and visiting those who are sick? What is he (7:10) talking about? Well, I hope to be able to answer that question in the lesson this morning, (7:20) because I believe that God develops our faith for us, helps us to develop our faith.

We don't (7:27) develop our faith by experience. And I wanted to point that out because when we see God coming to (7:35) Abraham, we see that Abraham has very little experience in believing in what God is promising (7:44) him. And so I believe that God is going to help you and me, right along with as he did Abraham, (7:53) in increasing our faith.

So as we look once again, what good is it, my brothers and sisters, (8:00) if someone claims to have

faith but has no deeds? What can those deeds be? (8:07) Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one (8:14) of you says to them, go in peace, keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about their physical (8:20) needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, (8:27) is dead. But someone will say, you have faith, I have deeds.

Show me your faith without deeds, (8:36) and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God? Good, (8:42) even the demons believe that and shudder. Now, he's going to go on, James is going to go on, (8:50) he's going to use Abraham as an example of faith.

And that's what we want to look at this morning, (8:57) is how did God help Abraham develop his faith? (9:03) By experience. And you and I, with divine intervention, providence, and preservation, (9:10) I believe that with all my heart, that God divinely intervenes in our lives. He preserves us.

(9:17) He presents us with the things that we need to have. And the Roman Letterman starts up by saying (9:24) that very thing. And he's telling us that everybody in this world has had an experience with God, (9:33) and they have no excuse for not believing in Him.

They have no excuse for not believing in Him. (9:43) They willingly ignore Him, and they willingly go against His will. So he goes on and he says, (9:53) you foolish person, do you not want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not (10:00) our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? (10:07) You see, that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete (10:14) by what he did.

And the scriptures was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God, (10:21) and it was credited to him as righteousness. And he was called God's friend. You see, (10:28) that a person is considered righteous by what they do, and not by faith alone.

(10:35) And so there goes the concept that I've just got to have faith, that's all. But there's, (10:41) it's not. They do not by faith alone.

In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute (10:49) considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them (10:54) off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. (11:01) And Jesus had an interesting confrontation with a fellow, and I'm sure that you recognize the (11:15) event that took place. It's found in Mark, the ninth chapter.

If you would like to look at that, (11:22) you can follow along. Mark, the ninth chapter, verse 23 and 25. I'm going to preface this (11:30) reading this way.

An individual can believe in God, (11:40) but just having the knowledge that there is a God and acquiesce to the fact that there is a God (11:47) is not going to make it. We have to have experience and have faith that God will work in (11:56) our lives and help us increase our faith to the point where we will actually believe 100% (12:04) that Jesus can present us before God without blemish. And so God is going to work in our (12:13) lives to the point to help us increase our faith.

This interesting conversation that Jesus had (12:21) is found in the ninth chapter, Mark, the ninth chapter, starting with verse 14, (12:29) and it points us out. When he came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, (12:40) and the teachers of the law arguing with them. As soon as all the people saw Jesus, (12:45) they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

(12:51) What are you arguing about? He asked. A man in the crowd answered, Teacher, (12:59) I brought you my son who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. (13:06) Whenever it sees him, it throws him to the ground.

He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, (13:12) and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not. (13:22) Notice here, the fellow came, he had heard about the healing of Jesus and Jesus being able to cast (13:34) out demons, and he expected Jesus' disciples to be able to do the same, and they haven't.

(13:43) What do you suppose is going on in this boy's mind, this father's mind? (13:50) Ah, it's wishful thinking. I've got to be realistic about this. He can't do this.

(13:58) And so, the boy's father is convinced that, you know, this is a wasted trip for me. (14:07) They can't cast him out. I thought he could be able to cast him out, but he can't.

And so, (14:19) Jesus responds in verse 19. The unbelieving generation, Jesus replied, (14:26) how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me. (14:32) So they brought him, and when the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy (14:37) into a convulsion.

He fell to the ground and rove around, foaming at the mouth. (14:43) Jesus asked the boy's father, how long has this been like this? And then the father responds, (14:51) from childhood, he answers. It has often thrown him into the fire or water to kill him, (14:57) but if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.

Notice what the father's saying to Jesus. (15:05) The word, if, gives me every idea that the father is very doubtful at this time (15:15) that Jesus can do it. He has no faith.

He believes in God. He truly believes in God, (15:24) but he doesn't believe that Jesus is the Son of God. He does not believe that Jesus can do what (15:29) he's doing.

He says, if you can do this, he's very doubtful. It's a waste of time. (15:37) So what is Jesus' response? Notice what Jesus says.

Verse 23, Jesus says to him after hearing (15:51) the father says, if you can do this, Jesus responds, and I'm amplifying this, if you can, (16:00) notice that, if you can, then Jesus says, everything is possible for one who believes. (16:14) Jesus is taking an affront to this, if you can, isn't he? Because he knows he can't do it. (16:22) But the father did not know he could do it, didn't believe he could do it, because (16:26) he's just going through the motions.

He has not had an actual experience. God has (16:33) not had an actual experience. So as he says, immediately the boy's father exclaimed, (16:40) notice what he says, I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief.

And I think that's where (16:52) the majority of Christians lie. I believe, I believe in God, but help me overcome my unbelief. (17:03) The faith, where's the faith? What is the faith? The assurance that what I hope for will come to (17:12) pass.

Well, what is the boy's hoping for? He's hoping, or the father's hoping for, he's hoping (17:19) for Jesus to secure his son. But he didn't have the confidence, did he? He just brought him there (17:27) because of an exercise. And many of us just approach God just for the exercise.

Help me (17:36) in my unbelief. And that's where I am. Help me in my unbelief.

I'm preaching to myself just as (17:45) much as I am to anybody who's hearing me. Help me in my unbelief. And God, I'm here to tell you, (17:54) God will answer that prayer.

He will answer that desire. Have faith in him. (18:06) Divine intervention, providence, and preservation.

That's my theme. You'll hear it many times (18:11) as often as I fill this booklet. You'll hear that theme, divine intervention, providence, (18:17) and preservation.

I believe in God's working in my life. I believe he works in your life. He works (18:24) in everybody's life, whether they're here or outside, going to a football game, or going to (18:30) a baseball game, or whatever it is.

He's working in their lives, trying to bring them about to (18:36) believe. And that's what Paul points out in Acts, the 17th chapter. He works in everybody's life (18:44) to bring them to the concept that he is, and that he's a rewarder of those who tell him they seek (18:49) him, and that if they would reach out for him, they will find him.

They will find him. That's (18:57) Paul's sermon on the mountain in Athens, the Athenian sermon, Acts 17th chapter. (19:07) So as we reflect upon that, let's see how God works in Abraham's life.

(19:13) We pick up with Abraham in Genesis, and we go to Genesis, the 12th chapter. And as soon as I get (19:26) there, we'll make the context. In Genesis, the 12th chapter, this is the first encounter that Abraham (19:34) has with God.

Abraham is in Ur of Chaldea. Chapter 21 gives us the genealogy of Abraham, (19:45) but it doesn't tell us anything really about what Abraham believes about God. (19:53) But he does have faith in God because he's going to respond to God's offer.

God is going to make (20:01) a proposition to Abraham. He's going to make an offer to him that he's going to make come to pass. (20:09) And so Abraham is listening to the proposition, and we can listen in on the proposition.

(20:17) Chapter 12, verse 1. The Lord said to Abraham, (20:23) go from your country, your people, and your father's household to the land I will show you. (20:29) Now notice what God's saying right from the very beginning. Get yourself away from everybody.

(20:37) Come out and follow me, and I will show you a piece of property that will be yours, (20:43) and an inheritance to your seed and your family. But the proposition is, (20:49) and there are criteria, you've got to leave your family. You've got to go by yourself.

(20:55) Notice that. The Lord said to him, said to Abraham, go from your country, your people, (21:01) and your father's household to the land I will show you. Now his proposition, and this is a (21:08) very important proposition because he's making the same proposition to you and me.

Jesus is (21:15) recounting that in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, chapter 6, where he tells us, don't worry about (21:21) what you're going to wear. Don't worry about what you're going to eat. Don't worry about your (21:25) housing.

God knows what you need before you even ask of him. He's looking after our welfare. (21:31) That's a proposition that you and I need to believe.

We need to have faith in. (21:35) But God is telling Abraham this very thing. Notice.

I will make you, verse 2, I will make (21:43) you into a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a (21:48) blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse, and all peoples (21:54) on earth will be blessed through you.

God's proposition is saying to him, you don't have to (22:04) worry a thing. Just follow my lead. Follow my divine intervention, providence, and preservation (22:14) in your life.

You don't have to worry about a thing. So what do we see happening? Verse 4. (22:25) So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he set (22:33) out from Haran.

He took his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot, and all the possessions they had accumulated (22:39) and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to the land of Canaan, and they (22:45) arrived there. What do we see? Abram doesn't follow the criteria, does he? He went to Haran, (22:58) from Ur-Qadi, he went to Haran, and he stayed there until his dad died. And when his father (23:05) passed away, he then picks up everything, and he takes Lot with him.

He's not going by himself. (23:14) He's not doing what God asked him to do already. Where's his faith? His faith would say, (23:21) I will do what you asked me to do, and I will do it without questioning.

But Abram (23:29) isn't believing him. Abram isn't believing God. And the very first thing that we see in this (23:37) chapter is Abram in Egypt.

And if you slip down to there, you'll see what happens in Egypt, (23:46) and we're not going to read it, but I'll leave that for you to read. I'll just recount what it (23:50) says. Abram is going into Egypt, and he looks about, and he sees these people, and he doesn't (23:58) like what he sees.

They scare him. He's afraid of them. And he's saying to his wife, pass yourself (24:05) off as my sister, because you are very beautiful.

And these people, they don't look like they're (24:12) God-fearing people at all. They look barbarous. They're going to kill me to get to you.

(24:21) Where's Abram's faith? What did God promise Abram? He promised him safety. He promised him (24:29) that whatever he confronts, that God will deliver him. He doesn't believe it.

(24:36) How do I know he doesn't believe it? Because he's taken steps to preserve his own life. (24:43) He's taken steps to say, Sarah, pass yourself off as my wife or as my sister, (24:50) because they will kill me. He doesn't believe God is going to intervene in their life and (24:57) provide him what did God promise him? I will curse those who curse you.

I will bless those (25:03) who bless you. And it says, whoever curses you, I will curse, and all the people on the earth will (25:09) be blessed through you. He doesn't believe it, his actions.

I will show you my faith by my deeds. (25:21) He has no faith. What does God do? Sure enough, the

king of Egypt, the Pharaoh, takes Sarah.

(25:32) He starts wooing her. He courts her. He's going to ask her to marry him, (25:37) become one of his wives.

And God has to divinely intervene and say, (25:42) you touch her and you're as good as dead. God divinely intervenes and providentially preserves (25:50) him. Abraham has to see that.

How much faith has he got at this point? (26:02) Really, let's go now to chapter 15, and we'll see God reiterating his promise to Abraham, (26:10) because Abraham has been traveling along, and he's to the point now, and I see I'm way out (26:16) of time, and I'm not going to be able to finish this the way I want to, but he sees they don't (26:25) have any children. They don't have any children. So Abraham in chapter 15 confronts God, (26:39) and he says, look, you promised me that my children would be an inheritance and that they (26:47) would have all this property and all the things that I own.

And he says, I don't have a child. (26:55) And here I am. I'm almost 90.

I am 90 years old. And Sarah is 80. She's 99.

Anyway, let's be (27:11) realistic. Abraham is saying to God, you can't come across with a child. You promised me a child (27:19) and you can't come across with it.

He's challenging God. God takes him out, and he looks at the skies, (27:28) and he says, look at the stars. He says, your inheritance will be, and your seed will be like (27:34) the stars in the sun and like the sands on the sea.

Abraham believes him. That's according to (27:43) scripture. He believes him at that point, but he doesn't have a child.

It takes another (27:51) confrontation with two men who have come to Abraham where he's camped out, and the two men (27:58) have to promise and make Abraham a promise saying, you will have a child a year from now. (28:07) And Sarah's listening, and Sarah does what? She laughs. Sure.

Sure thing. I'm 90 years old, (28:17) and I'm going to have a child. Let's be realistic about this.

Where's the faith? The faith's not (28:26) there, is it? It confronts us quite often, doesn't it? Challenges us to believe that God is divinely (28:35) intervening in our lives, that God will divinely intervene in providence, fully work in our lives, (28:44) and preserve us. But God made a promise. Abraham says, okay, I believe you.

So a year from now, (29:00) Sarah has a child, and it's Isaac, doesn't it? So Isaac is oftentimes referred to as the child (29:08) of promise. He is the child of promise. Now, to do a little bit more, he's traveling, and he's now (29:20) in the Philistine area, and he doesn't like what he sees there, and he says to Sarah, (29:31) I should stop off with my sister again.

Where's his faith? His faith hasn't gotten to the point (29:38) where he believes God 100 percent, divinely intervening in his life. Again, it takes God to (29:48) divinely intervene and preserve Abraham and Sarah. So now, in chapter 22, let's go to that.

(30:01) I hope you don't mind running over just quite a bit. (30:06) God comes to Abraham. What kind of faith does Abraham have at this point? (30:12) God's been working on him, hasn't he? And if all those things had happened to you, (30:17) would you have the faith that Abraham has? (30:21) Truly, we would, wouldn't we? But you know, God's working divinely in every one of our lives, (30:28) to the point where we ought to have this kind of faith ourselves.

(30:33) We really ought to, because while God is divinely working in our lives, providentially, (30:39) the job you have, the health you have, all the various other things that come into your lives, (30:46) God is divinely intervening and working in your life. Do we see his hand? He wants us to see his (30:53) hand. But anyway, that's another rabbit to chase a little bit later on.

Let's see what happens here. (31:06) Chapter 22. Sometime later, God tests Abraham.

What purpose is a test? To see where you are, (31:19) how you're progressing. So Abraham is being tested by God. We use tests in school.

We use tests (31:28) for getting our driver's license. We use tests for a lot of things, don't we? (31:34) And God is testing. He's not tempting him.

He's testing him. And this test is for yours and my (31:42) purpose, so that we can see how far God came in developing Abraham's faith, (31:48) and to what degree Abraham's faith has come. So God is testing Abraham, and he says to him, (31:55) Abraham, here I am, he replied.

Then God said, take your son and your only son, whom you love, (32:02) Isaac, and go to the region of Moriah, and sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a (32:09) mountain. I will show you. Verse three.

Early the next morning, Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. (32:17) He took with him two of his servants and his son, Isaac. And when he had cut enough wood for the (32:26) burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.

On the third day, Abraham looked (32:33) up and saw the place in the distance. And he said to his servants, and this is important, stay here (32:42) with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship, and then we will come back (32:49) to you.

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son, Isaac, and he (32:58) himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said (33:06) to his father, Abraham, father. Yes, my son, Abraham replied.

The fire and the wood are here. (33:16) Where is the lamb for the burnt offering? Notice the answer. Abraham answers in verse eight.

(33:29) God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son. And the two of them went on (33:37) together. There's your clue.

Abraham really believes that God is going to provide a sacrifice. (33:52) God will provide that sacrifice, and he's going to go on. He's going to follow through, isn't he? (34:04) Do we have that confidence? We need to have that confidence.

God will provide. (34:13) And Abraham really believes this. God will provide.

It's not just a statement to be (34:22) flippant about. God will provide. And so he goes on, and we see that Abraham is not disappointed, (34:35) it seems.

Verse nine. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar (34:44) there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar on top of the (34:53) wood.

Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord (35:00) called out to him from heaven, Abraham, Abraham, here I am. He replied, do not lay a hand on the (35:10) boy.

He said, do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God because you have not (35:18) withheld from me your son, your only son. There's the deed.

There's the deed. He's showing his faith. (35:33) I'll show you my faith by my deeds.

You show me your faith without your deeds. What good is (35:42) faith without deeds? God, I'm going to share with you tonight, (35:53) God has things that he would like for us to interact and do, (35:57) especially when we have confrontations with our fellow human beings and so on. (36:03) And he has ways that he wants for us to interact with one another.

(36:08) And he wants us to take him up on it. He wants us to believe that this is the way to interact. (36:14) This is the way I want you to do this.

Now, if you believe in God, (36:23) you'll do it exactly the way he asks you to do it. But if you don't believe in God, (36:29) you'll do it the way the world wants you to do it. That Abraham with his deeds (36:39) showed that he believed in God.

God credited him with righteousness because of that. (36:47) Now, what kind of faith does God expect of us? Initially, what God wants of us (37:01) is to believe that he is and that he's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. (37:08) He also wants us to believe that we are separated from him, that sin separates us from him, (37:18) and he wants reconciliation with us.

And he is reaching out on his own volition, (37:27) and he's providing us with a way to be reconciled to him. And God wants us to believe that God, (37:36) that he loves us to the point that he is willing to do whatever is necessary to reconcile us to him. (37:45) He wants us to believe that.

He wants us to have faith in that. Faith that God (37:51) is extending to us the opportunity to be reconciled to him and have our sins forgiven. (37:59) He wants us to believe that he's doing it through Jesus.

(38:04) He wants us to believe that Jesus is that sacrifice, that atonement, that makes us (38:10) righteous in the sight of God. He wants us to accept the fact that Jesus is the perpetuation, (38:19) and that the only way that we're going to be reconciled to God, the only way, (38:24) there is no other name under heaven whereby man may be saved, the only way that you and I (38:31) can be reconciled to God is to come to God through Jesus and accept Jesus' apostleship. (38:41) Discipleship.

Accept the fact that Jesus can be our high priest, (38:47) and accept the fact that when we are baptized into Christ, (38:54) that we have the forgiveness of our sins, (38:58) and that Jesus then can present us before God without spot, without punishment. (39:03) He wants us to believe that, accept

that. Do you find that unrealistic? (39:16) Many people do.

But God wants us to accept that. He wants us to believe that. (39:25) And if you have come and have not come to the point in your life where you (39:30) receive, responded to Jesus' invitation to become a disciple of his, to be baptized (39:36) for the remission of your sins, we'd like to extend to you the opportunity to do so.

(39:41) All together we stand and sing this song of encouragement.