Lent 2 Genesis 12:1-8
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We Are Children of Father Abraham
I. We too build our faith on God's clear Word and promises.
II. Our faith also shapes our daily life.

Dear Christian friends,

**"I believe."** The words can just roll right off our lips. It can be easy to say you **believe** in God when things are GOING GOOD. When you are enjoying good health – have a good job – a **good** marriage – when the crops and prices are **good**, - **sure**, "GOD IS GOOD!" But what if your life is NOT SO GOOD? You've lost your **job** - you've been diagnosed with a **horrible disease** – your marriage is falling **apart** – a hailstorm **ruined** your crops. Shall we talk then about HOW GOOD God is? Many people then ask, "WHAT GOOD is God?"

**"I believe"** is not just admitting there IS a God. The devil knows that but the devil is NO BELIEVER. **"I believe"** expresses a PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP with God – a relationship built on TRUST. **Faith** is trusting God – COUNTING ON God to do what He's said.

In the epistle reading Paul wrote, ***"Abraham believed God. He is the father of us all.'"*** WE ARE CHILDREN OF FATHER ABRAHAM. **As Abraham's children** 1)we too build our faith on God's clear Word and promises and 2)our faith also shapes our **daily life**.

**I. We too build our faith on God's clear Word and promises.**

So what do we know about our DEAR FATHER Abraham? Up until **this point** in his life NOT A WHOLE LOT! The first 74 years of Abraham's life are **pretty much** a CLOSED BOOK. We know his father's name was **Terah** and he had two brothers named **Nahor** and **Haran**. Until God changed their names Abraham was **Abram** and his wife Sarah was **Sarai**. We also know that Abraham and Sarah HAD NO CHILDREN. Sarah ***"was barren"*** – unable to have children.

Abraham grew up in ***"Ur of the Chaldees"*** – in the **area** of latter-day Babylon – **present day** Iraq. **Later on** Abraham moved to Haran with his dad Terah. We're not told hat his CHILDHOOD was like. **Nor do we know** his mother's name or his father's occupation. ALL WE'RE TOLD – and this is from the book of **Joshua** – is that Abraham's father Terah worshipped idols.

Then God SPOKE to Abraham. God made promises to **our father**. Spectacular promises – unbelievable promises – promises TOO GOOD to be true – but they WERE TRUE! God clearly said, ***"I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great. You will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse anyone who dishonors you. All of the families of the earth will be blessed in you."*** In the coming chapters God REPEATS those promises to strengthen Abraham in his faith – to ASSURE him, "You heard Me right, Abraham. I did promise that to you and I WILL DO **just that**. I won't LET YOU DOWN. You can count on Me **to keep** My promises."

JUST AS He did for our father Abraham GOD SPEAKS to us. It may not be AS SPECTACULAR as **when He spoke** to our father. It may have LOST ITS THRILL for us by being so familiar – but it IS STILL the **same thing**. EVERY TIME you read your Bible – **every time** you come to church or stay for Bible class – GOD IS SPEAKING to you **personally**. The Lord God **almighty** – our Creator – SPEAKS to us THROUGH His Word. The Bible is not simply filled with some INSPIRING **stories** – it is divinely inspired in **all** it says. The Bible is a bold, clear, ***"This is what the LORD says."***

JUST AS He did for our father Abraham God makes us some FANTASTIC PROMISES. God **promises** us His love and forgiveness – **promises** to answer all our prayers and work all things for our

eternal good. God **promises** us eternal life in heaven the **very moment** we die – **promises** us the resurrection of the body and the reunion of the **Last Day**. God's promises sound TOO GOOD to be true but just as for our **father Abraham** God has CLEARLY SPOKEN.

JUST LIKE our **father Abraham** we build our faith on God's CLEAR Word and promises. We don't base our faith on what WE THINK **is true** – on what FEELS RIGHT or MAKES SENSE or SOUNDS GOOD to us. Our THINKING is **often** messed up. Our FEELINGS can change **from day** to day. We are not to hold God to promises He NEVER made. We shouldn't be disappointed when **God doesn't do** something He's never promised to do.

There are only two things **anyone can do** with God's Word. We either accept it IN FAITH or we reject it IN UNBELIEF. We either believe God and TAKE HIM **at His Word** or we don't believe God and call Him a LIAR instead.

***"Abraham believed God."*** As children of Abraham we too ***"believe God."*** That faith – that TRUST – is at the heart of **our relationship** with God. We're not talking JUST ANY OLD faith but a very specific faith. ***"You are all sons of God through faith IN CHRIST JESUS,"*** Paul wrote.

**In His Word** God confronts us with our sins. God pronounces us GUILTY of **breaking** His commandments – **pronounces** us unworthy of heaven – fit only for hell's eternal punishment. God makes clear He has EVERY RIGHT to write us off His books forever.

But then God says, "Let Me SHOW YOU what **I'm going to do** instead. I will send My Son to be your Savior. He will take your place under divine law and perfectly obey all the commandments for you. Then My Son will take the blame for all your sins. I will punish Him **in your place** – **for your sins**. He will shed His blood to ***'cleanse you from all sin.'*** My sinless Son will die to ***'take away the sin of the world.'*** But that won't BE THE END of My Son! **Three days later** He will rise from the dead – He will come out of His grave alive and victorious. You won't have to do ANYTHING to save yourselves. **My Son** will take care of EVERYTHING for you. I PROMISE you that trusting in My Son Jesus you have My full forgiveness of all your sins. **I promise** you that relying on My Son and all He did you are coming straight to Me in heaven when you die." JUST LIKE our **father Abraham** we ***"believe God."*** We TAKE GOD **at His Word**. We COUNT ON God to do what He's promised us.

God had spoken to **our father** Abraham. God had made those promises. ***"So Abram went, as the LORD had told him."*** Like Abraham…

**II. Our faith shapes our daily life.**

What is that daily LIFE OF FAITH? It is a life of OBEDIENCE to **God's will**. God had told Abraham to PACK UP and MOVE to a land God would later show Him. **As someone** who has moved and lived in several different states – who has left behind **dear family** and **good friends** – that's TOUGH to do! But AT LEAST **at least** we have cell phones and **email** to keep us IN TOUCH. **At least** we know where we are going and have an idea of **what to expect**. But not Abraham! **Think** of how Abraham explained this to his **wife** – to the **family and friends** he would leave behind. "HONEY, we're moving. DON'T ASK me where or what the place is like because **I don't know**. ALL I KNOW is that God said get going." Abraham looked **pretty stupid**. But he didn't care. He had God's COMMAND and God's PROMISES!

Our **sinful natures** like to make excuses why we CAN'T DO what God wants – **at least** NOT NOW. God is supposed to understand and not ask SO MUCH of us. ***"So Abram went, AS THE LORD had told him. Abram took Sarai his wife, Lot his brother's son, and all the possessions and people that they had, and they set out to travel to the land of Canaan."*** As children of **father Abraham** we are called to that SAME LIFE of OBEDIENT faith.

That life of faith is also one of CONFIDENT TRUST in God – of ***"being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."*** Abraham finally arrived in Canaan. But WAIT a minute! The

**land** was already occupied! ***"The Canaanites were in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, 'I will give this land to your descendants.'"*** Abraham didn't have a son. Sarah wasn't pregnant. God promises this OCCUPIED land to a SON Abraham **didn't have**. EVERYTHING Abraham saw and felt told him this was all RIDICULOUS. But Abraham didn't question God. "OK, God. I moved **just as** You told me to. Now it's TIME FOR YOU to come through on Your end. **Come on**, God, LET ME SEE **some** of those blessings You've promised me."

As children of **father Abraham** we are called to **that life** of CONFIDENT TRUST in God. JUST LIKE **father Abraham** what we see and feel often SEEMS TO CONTRADICT what **we believe** and what God **has promised** us. IF God loves me and is taking care of me then WHY do I have so many problems and pains? **Just like** father Abraham we need to wait for GOD'S TIMING and accept GOD'S PLANS and SCHEDULE for our lives. God will come through on His promises. He always does – and at JUST THE RIGHT time.

Twice we're told, ***"There he built an altar to the LORD."*** The life of faith is one of FAITHFUL WORSHIP. Faith needs regular time to PRAISE God for His **grace** and **goodness** - to PRAY for God's **guidance** and **blessings** – to CONSIDER ANEW God's Word and works and **promises**. As we focus on God's Word and promises God STRENGTHENS our faith and helps us live our faith. God recorded ***"His mighty deeds"*** – He gave us His promises IN WRITING – so we could look them over again and again and be all the more sure of them.

Do you look at **father Abraham** and think, "I COULD NEVER DO that?" Do you feel more like a THIRD COUSIN **twice removed** instead of one of his children? Abraham was NO DIFFERENT from us. His faith was strong AS HE KEPT his eyes on God's promises. When he didn't do that he **really** MESSED UP BIG TIME. **Father Abraham** shows us JUST HOW IMPORTANT regular worship and Bible study are for **our daily life** of faith. Our sinful nature will **tell us** not to worry if we **don't make it** to church every week – we don't need those Lenten services – we've heard it ALL BEFORE. But then father Abraham says, "ADD UP all those **altars I built** in Canaan. That's where I found the strength to TRUST and OBEY God. You will too." **Then** we will be just like **father Abraham**. Amen.

APOSTLES' CREED