

# Abraham, Our Example of Faith

By Henry Mahan

**Bible Text:** Galatians 3:6-7

**Henry T. Mahan Tape Library**

**Zebulon Baptist Church**

6088 Zebulon Highway

Pikeville, KY 41501

Website: <http://www.sovereign-grace.com/13thstbap.htm>

Online Sermons: <http://mahan.sermonaudio.com>

I want to make a few statements before I bring the message this morning. Our one concern is to glorify the heavenly Father and to preach the gospel of his grace. And next to that our concern and desire is that you might come to know Christ as your Lord and Savior, that you might hear the gospel and have your heart opened by the Spirit of God to understand the gospel, your ears opened to hear not my words, but the Word of God in power, in conviction, in the Holy Ghost and that your eyes of faith may be opened to behold the Son of God, our Lord and Savior. We are not in the religious con game. We are not in religious promotion and entertainment, we are here to preach Christ and him crucified. I am here to deal with the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we are not begging for support. God will meet our needs and God will supply our needs according to his riches in glory through Jesus Christ.

There is one thing that I do. I offer these messages to you on cassette tape. Now, we sell these cassette tapes for exactly what they cost us to produce. We make not one dime, in fact, lose money on these tapes. But I want the gospel to be in the hands of the people. And any message that I preach on this television program you can receive, any back message, all the way back nine or 10 years. We have all the messages that I have preached on this program for the past nine years. And they can be ordered for the same price of \$2 for two messages, one on one side and one on the other side of the tape. And we will be happy to send them to you because we want you to hear the Word as it is preached from the Word of God and share it with your friends.

Now, if you want a back copy of these messages that I have brought over these years on this television program, write to us and we will send you a tape list. We will be glad to do that.

But I am concerned for my generation. We are playing church. We are playing church. We have got us a God that we have whittled out with our own penknives and we have concocted him in our own imagination. We have got as many different ways to God as there are preachers and people. And so little of the Word of God is being preached. We are entertaining people. We are promoting programs. We are building schools. We are trying to straighten out the United States government. We are trying to dry up all the liquor crowd and shut down all the dens of iniquity and nobody is preaching the gospel.

And I am determined, like Paul the apostle, I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Now, let the winds blow and let the tempter come and let people try to side track us and divert our attention. I am going to keep doing what I have done through these 35 years. I am going to preach Christ.

If you listen to this program you are going to hear the gospel. And this morning I am preaching from Galatians three, the third chapter of Galatians.

Now turn with me to Galatians chapter three and let me read two verses, six and seven. Now, listen carefully. Here is the subject: Abraham, our example of faith.

Now, we are going to learn something about faith. I'm not going to just entertain you this morning. We are going to talk about the subject of faith. And when I get through, if you will listen, you will learn something about faith at least in your head whether you believe in your heart or not. But at least you will understand in the even that God is pleased to give you faith at a later date you will have a foundation of the Word of God to base it on. And the Word of God is the foundation of faith.

It says in Galatians 3:6-7, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness," for righteousness before God, in the sight of God. He believed God. "Know you therefore, " listen to this. "Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." He is our example. He is our father in faith. He believed God. It was counted to him for righteousness and you will come the same way or you won't come at all.

If you will look at Romans four you will see how that Abraham believed God, that God was able to do all that he promised and it was imputed to him for righteousness. And Paul wrote, "And this was written not for his sake alone that it was imputed to him for righteousness, but for us also to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on him that raised Christ from the dead."

Now, there is a lot of religion in the world today, just an awful lot of religion and a whole lot of preaching about faith, "Keep the faith. Have faith," all these different things, you know. And usually when men preach and talk about faith they wind up talking about Abraham. and rightly so because Abraham is truly, according to the Scripture, our example of faith.

Let me show you that. The first time that the word "believe" is used in the Bible, the first time, now...You preachers, if any of you are listening, you know something about the law of first mention. Well, the first time that the word "believed" is used in the Bible it refers to Abraham, the very first time when God uses the word "believe" in Genesis 15:6, "And Abraham believed in the Lord and it was counted to him for righteousness." That is the first time that salvation is dealt with on that principle of believing in the Lord and receiving because of it, a righteousness. And he is talking about Abraham.

Now, listen to this. Romans 4:11 calls Abraham “the father of all that believe,” Abraham. In Romans 4:12 it exhorts us to “Walk in the steps of our father Abraham.” So this Abraham, when we preach about faith we nearly have to go back and pick up Abraham because he is the father of the faithful. He is the example of faith. And the first time that God talks about believing he talks about Abraham.

Now, he wasn't the first believer, by any means. But the first time that God talks about believing in the Bible he talks about Abraham.

But I can assure you of this. Now, listen. I can assure you of this, that this faith of Abraham, which is our example, is a whole lot more than lip service. Now this faith of Abraham that brought righteousness was a whole lot more than lip service. “You call me Lord, Lord with your lips, but your heart is far from me.” It's a whole lot more than that. It is not just walking down an aisle on Sunday night while the choir sings, “Just as I am,” and saying, “I believe in Jesus. I accept Jesus as my personal Savior,” and calling him Lord with our lips while our hearts are still in materialism, in the world and in selfishness and in self righteousness. There is a whole lot more than that. And this faith of Abraham is a whole lot more than the observance of days, set aside one day out of the week and act pious or set aside 10% of my income in order to gain God's blessing. There is a whole lot more than the observance of rituals and ceremonies and sabbath days.

In Isaiah one our Lord said, “Your new moons and your sabbaths and your feasts are a trouble to me. They are an abomination to me. They are iniquity. Away with them. Away with them.” God is talking about all of the observances of sabbath days and new moons and feast days and rituals. He said, “It is iniquity. Just do away with it. When your heart is not in these things, just do away with them.”

This faith of Abraham is a whole lot more than doctrinal orthodoxy or outwards reformation. The Pharisees were orthodox. Oh, how orthodox they were. They were orthodox and dead, dead as a hammer. And Saul of Tarsus was a moral man, but an unrighteous man before God.

So this faith of Abraham is more than orthodoxy, it is more than fundamentalism. It is more than believing in the blood, the book and the blessed hope. It is a whole lot more than lip service. It is a whole lot more than doing good works. It is a whole lot more than fasting and tithing and praying and doing good works. Listen. The Pharisees said...prayed thus with himself, “Lord, I fast. I tithe.” He was making an effort to pray and to give alms to the poor. He was doing all of those things. He was fasting, praying, tithing and giving alms to the poor. And our Lord Jesus Christ left him unjustified. That is what he said, unjustified.

Saving faith, now listen to me. Saving faith, this faith of Abraham, it has something to do with God himself, not just the things of God or the possessions of God, this thing of saving faith, this thing of the faith of Abraham, Abraham had none of this ritualism, no ceremonialism, he had no cathedrals, he had no temples, he had no steeples, he had no

beads to count, he had none of these material things, no stained glass windows, none of these things, no pin to wear in his lapel, he had none of these things. He believed God.

Do you see what I'm getting at? He had none of the visual aids of religion. He believed God. This thing of saving faith, the faith of Abraham—now listen to me—has something to do with God himself, God himself, as revealed in Christ. And this saving faith of Abraham—and we are told to walk in the steps of our father Abraham. We are told over here in my text, listen. It says, “Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, of saving faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” And this thing has to do with God himself, the person of God as revealed in Christ. And it has something to do with the heart, not just the form, not the ceremony, not just the outward deeds, this thing of faith has something to do with the heart. Abraham had none of these. He didn't go on a Thursday night visitation. No, he didn't. Abraham didn't have a training union. He was out there in the desert. He was out there in the desert alone with God. And yet he is called the example of faith. He is called the father of the faithful. He is called the example of the believer. And the very things that are written of him are the things I want. And it has to do with the heart and it has to do with the attitude, the attitude and conduct of the believer. And it has to do with the living union.

God spoke to Abraham face to face as a man with his friend. He had a living, vital, personal, intimate union with the living God, not with just his associates, not just with his possessions, but with God himself.

Now, we had better get a hold of what I am talking about. We had better get a hold of what I am talking about. We have mechanized faith. We have brought faith down from God clear down to the earth. We have based it on human wisdom, how to do this and I've got all kind of books, how to do this and how to be baptized in the Holy Ghost and how to win souls and how to lead the victorious life and how to do this and oh, we've got God down here where any natural man can understand him.

But this thing of saving faith, if you will go back with me to the desert and you see that man Abraham who was the friend of God, the friend of God, a man who walked with God, a man of whom God said over a whole period of 6000 years, “Walk in the steps of Abraham. Have the faith of Abraham. He is the example of faith.”

I will tell you this about faith. I'll tell you this about this saving faith. It is the work of God and it is the gift of God.

Now Scripture says, “For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves.” Faith is not of yourself. It is the gift of God. The Scripture says, “It is given unto you to believe. It is given unto you to believe.” Abraham was a miracle of God's grace. That's right. The gift of faith comes from God. Every good gift and perfect gift cometh from above. A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above.

Who made Abraham to differ? The same one who makes every man to differ. “Who maketh thee to differ? What dost thou have that thou didst not receive? It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Salvation is a work of God. Salvation is of the Lord. And this faith is the gift of God. It is a miraculous gift of God. It is a wonderful gift of God. He is the source of faith. Faith is not the product of a human heart. Faith doesn't grow in the soul of human depravity. It comes from heaven. It is a gift of God.

Secondly, faith is a living principle, a living principle. It is the single motive for all that a believer does. Faith is the single motive for all that a believer does. The just shall live by faith, by faith. He has hope because he believes. And he believes God and therefore everything he does is motivated because he believes. Everything Abraham did, he did because he believed God. He believed God. He believed God.

It is a living principle. It is not just a dead, isolated act, one sole single act. Faith is not an isolated act. Men believe, they are believing and they shall believe. It is a living principle.

And then faith is not only a living principle, but it is a producing principle. That's right. It is a producing principle. It's not dormant. It's not dead. But it actually produces that which glorifies God. True faith does.

James says, “Your faith without works is dead.” A man says, “I believe in God” and yet he doesn't love God. He doesn't love the commandments of God, he doesn't love the Word of God, he doesn't love the people of God, he doesn't love the house of God, he doesn't love the fellowship of God. He is a liar and the truth is not in him because this faith, this gift of God, this living principle is a producing principle. And it produces the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, kindness, meekness, gentleness and all these things that are glorifying to God. It is a producing principle. That is exactly right.

“Show me your faith without your works.” It can't be done. “I will show you my faith by works.” It is Christ that justifies the soul. It is works that justifies our faith.

And then faith is a persevering principle. It is of a persevering nature. It never quits, it continues until it gives way to reality. Faith continues until it gives way to reality. Hebrews three says, “We are of the house of Christ if we hold fast our confidence steadfast to the end.” And we are redeemed by the blood of Christ if we continue in faith.

You see, all these Old Testament believers died in faith. Paul said, “The time of my departure is at hand. I have kept the faith. I have kept the faith. I have finished my course. Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day and not me only, but all them that love his appearing.”

So I tell you, this thing of faith, it does more than walk an aisle. It does more than accept Jesus as personal Savior. Anybody does that. Anybody is a fool that doesn't do that if all

the things they say are so. Just walk the aisle and go to heaven when you die, accept Jesus as your personal Savior and live in a mansion in the sweet by and by. A man would be a fool not to take a preacher up on that.

But this thing of living faith has to do with God. It has to do with the heart. It has to do with the attitude and conduct of a believer. It has to do with a living union. It has to do with a persevering, producing principle in the heart. And it does more, faith does more than just act religious on Sunday. It does more than set aside 10% for religious purposes. It does more than quite a few bad habits. Saving faith believes God. It believes God in the sunshine and the rain. It believes God in success or failure. It believes God in youth or old age. It believes God in sickness or health. It believes God in life or death. But saving faith believes God.

Like Job said, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

It's like old Eli said, "It is the Lord. Let him do what he will."

It is like Paul said, "The Lord worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

Praise ye the Lord. It believes God.

And faith loves the Lord God, love him, loves him with a genuine heart. Faith walks with God. Faith glorifies God. Faith trusts God, faith worships and praises God and faith dies believing God.

The hymn writer put it this way. "Oh, for a faith that will not shrink, though pressed by many a foe, that will not tremble on the brink of any earthly woe, a faith that will not murmur or complain beneath God's chastening rod, but in the hour of grief and pain, that faith will lean upon God. Lord, give me such a faith as this. And then whatever may come I will taste, even now, the happy bliss of thy eternal home."

In closing this message I want to give you five brief facts about Abraham's faith.

Now, I have tried to show you from the Word of God that Abraham is the example of faith, Abraham, our example of faith. And this faith, this faith is not to play pretty. This faith is not just a religious idol. This is a living principle. This is a producing principle. This is a persevering principle. This is a heart attitude and heart relationship in union with the living God, come what may. I believe God. I believe God.

Now, Abraham had that faith. He believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Now, how do we know that Abraham believed God? How did Abraham know that he believed God? How did Abraham know he believed God? How do you know he believed God?

Well, his faith was revealed by trial. That's right. By trial. Trials don't produce faith. Trials reveal faith. And in the many trials of Abraham we see his faith loud and clear.

Now, let me give you just five of them, briefly. Number one, Abraham's faith separated him from unbelievers. That's right. In Genesis 12:1, "Now the Lord God said to Abraham, 'Get thee out of thy country, from thy kindred, from thy father's house to a land I will show thee.' So Abraham departed."

Now, Abraham's father and all his kin folks and all of the people of his tribe were idolaters. That's right. They weren't worshipping God, not down in Ur of the Chaldees. They were idolaters. You read that in the Scripture. They worshipped false gods. And God came to Abraham and said, "You have got to separate yourself from these idolaters and these unbelievers and go to a land I will show thee." So Abraham left. Abraham left. Abraham could find no fellowship and no peace among people who did not worship the living God.

Now, let me show you something. When a man or a woman today comes to saving faith in Jesus Christ, if he comes to true faith in the true Christ and his heart and life is changed by the grace of God, he is going to experience some division and problems with his former associates and with his family and with his relatives who do not believe. Now, will show you that in Matthew 10, verse 32. Our Lord said, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father. Think not that I am come to send peace on this earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at odds with his father and a daughter against her a mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law and a man's enemies shall be they of his own household. But he that loveth kindred, father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife more than me is not worthy of me."

True faith will stand against any opposition. Come apart. Be ye separate. What fellowship does darkness have with light? What communion does Baal have with almighty God? And what will happen? If you come to true saving faith in a true living Christ and believe the principles of the Word you are going to have some trouble, some division, some opposition. And what you have to do is leave it and depart from it just like Abraham did. He was 75 years old, nearly. He lived there all his life.

"I can't leave my friends and family. I've got to stay here."

Faith believes God and takes sides with God against anyone.

Secondly, Abraham's faith delivered him from selfishness. In Genesis 13, if you will read it, Abraham's nephew Lot was with him. And God blessed them both. They became very rich, had a lot of cattle and oxen, sheep and goats and all these animals. And after a while they both got so prosperous that their servants began to have conflict and Abraham said, "Now, we're brothers. Let's don't have conflict."

And he stood one day and he told Lot, he said, “Now, Lot, you pick out any land you want. I don’t care where it is. You pick it out and you can have it. You can have it. You go that way and I will go whatever way opposite from where you choose.”

Now, Abraham could have pulled rank on Lot. He could have said, “Now, son, I’m the oldest and I am your elder and I am the leader of this outfit so I’ll just take the preferred land and give you what’s left.”

The faith of God had delivered Abraham from selfishness and greed. And that old man could stand there and tell Lot, “Pick out any land you want and I will take what’s left.”

And, of course, Lot did what most of us would have done. He took the well watered plains. He took the bottom 40 and left Abraham the mountains. But Abraham, in giving Lot his choice fulfilled the purpose of God for himself. And yet he showed his faith in God to supply his need.

True faith does not seek her own. True faith depends on God.

Another illustration of this, when he looked to God to supply his needs. Lot and the kings of Sodom were captured and taken off by wicked kings. And Abraham took 318 men and rescued them and were bringing them back and the kings of Sodom said to Abraham, they said, “Now, Abraham, you take all the gold and silver and all the jewels and all the precious stones and all these other things. You take it. We’ll just take the people.”

Listen to Abraham. Abraham looked at that old wicked king and he said, “You listen to me. I have lifted my hand to the Lord, the most high God, the possessor, the owner of heaven and earth. I have looked to God. I will not take anything from you lest you say, ‘I have made Abraham rich.’ If Abraham is rich, God will make him rich.”

That’s faith. That’s faith. True faith looks to God for salvation. True faith looks to God for help. True faith looks to God for every need. True faith looks to God for protection. True faith believes this verse of Scripture, Philippians 4:19. “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

Our God cares how you acquire your possessions. He cares how you get them. And our God cares how you look upon those possessions. The love of money is the root of evil. And our God cares how you use your possessions. But faith looks squarely at all these material things. Abraham, they had piled out there in front of him the wealth of Sodom, the wealth of that world. And they said, “Abraham, take it.”

He said, “I don’t want it. I don’t want it. I have lifted my hand to God. And it is an empty hand and God will fill it and I will trust in him.”

Are you trusting God? That’s faith. It waits on the Lord.



And now I'll tell you another thing. His faith was willing to part with his works and look to grace alone. One of the hardest trials he had is when God came to him and said, "Put Ishmael out."

Now, you know Hagar was the bond woman who represents the law and Ishmael is the bond woman's son who represents our fleshly works. Abraham was the one that brought that fellow into the world contrary to God's commandment. And God said, "He's got to go."

And when he was 14 years old Abraham took him, put a bottle of water on his mother's shoulder and kissed him good bye because Isaac represents grace and Ishmael represents works and Abraham knew that grace and works can't thrive and exist together so works has to go.

And with all the pain it caused him, he put Ishmael out and kept Isaac alone, the son of the promise, the son of grace, the son of God's sovereign power to be his heir.

And then, last of all, his faith yielded to God the most prized possession, his son. God came to him and said, "Abraham, take that son, thine only son whom thou lovest, to Mount Moriah and sacrifice him as a burnt offering to me." And Abraham departed. He didn't question, didn't argue against God. He believed God. He believed God. God said that his seed would be through Isaac and Isaac would be his heir and he believed God. And he knew that if he killed him God would raise Isaac from the dead. But he withheld not his only son and God said, "I know now that you love me because you have not withheld from me your only son."

If you love God your prize possession will not be withheld from him because he loved you and didn't withhold his prize possession, his only begotten son.

Faith. Faith.

As I said at the beginning of the program, this message, "Abraham, Our Example of Faith," and the message "Jesus Christ our eternal Savior" is on one tape, two sermons on one tape. Send two dollars. We will mail it to you by return mail.

Until next week, may the Lord bless you everyone.