

HEROES OF THE BIBLE

REMAINING FAITHFUL THROUGH
YOUR LATER YEARS

Believing God

'Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness'
(Gen. 15:6).

Abram's faith in God was quite remarkable. He was a childless man of 75 and God promised that his descendants would be as many as the stars in the night sky, and he believed God! He ignored his advancing years and the growing limitations of his body. God had promised and that was enough for him. Such faith was the grounds of Abraham's acceptance with God as we are told in Genesis 15:6.

It is the same for us. The Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 4:5 that 'to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness'. So we believe that God justifies wicked people on the basis of Christ's death for sinners alone, without our contributing anything at all.

This is the glory of being a Christian. We depend entirely on what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. We don't depend on our own merits or efforts. We don't depend on our religious observance or some ceremony we have gone through. It is by grace alone, through

faith alone, in Christ alone. Praise God for all His mercy and grace.

Abraham 'believed the LORD' and His promise despite his age and despite what his experience of life told him. It is so easy to listen to other voices than the Lord's. But when we do that we begin to rely on other things and not to depend entirely on Jesus Christ. Such thinking opens the door to doubts and uncertainty. Fears may come to us but we must simply look to Jesus. The fact is that, as justified sinners, we are completely accepted by God and there is nothing for us to add. No matter what our age we can trust in Him and know the glory of sins forgiven.

***'Saved by grace
alone! This is all
my plea'***

*From the hymn 'Grace! 'tis a
charming sound'*

Something to Laugh About

'Is anything too hard for the LORD?' (Gen. 18:14).

Sarah laughed when the Lord said, 'I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son' (v. 10). She couldn't help herself. The thought of having a child at 89 years of age seemed ludicrous. God had promised many years before that she would have a child, but it just hadn't happened. The idea that it would happen now was frankly incredible.

These three men had turned up, and one of them had made this extraordinary prediction. Sarah was caught off guard. It was too fantastic. But this was no ordinary visitor: it was the Lord of heaven and earth. He knew she had laughed. So he answered her unbelief with an even more astounding statement, 'Is anything too hard for the LORD?'

That had never occurred to Sarah. She knew a lot about Him because of His dealings with Abraham and herself over many years. But she had yet to learn that 'all things are possible' (Matt. 19:26; Mark 10:27) for this God who knows no limits.

If we are honest with ourselves we can easily feel like Sarah, especially in our later years. We have nursed hopes that the Lord might do certain things for us, but nothing has happened and we have given up hoping. We still trust the Lord, but there are clouds of uncertainty hovering at the back of our minds. And sometimes they trouble us and create a degree of despondency. But our God is the same as He was with Sarah. If He has promised, He is able to perform.

That is what Sarah found. One year later the baby was born. They called him Isaac at the Lord's instruction. Isaac means 'laughter'. (The Lord has a sense of humour.) 'Is anything too hard for the LORD?'

***'The God of
Abraham praise,
who reigns
enthroned above'***

From the hymn of that name

You Can Always Rely on Him

‘God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering’ (Gen. 22:8).

Abraham was 113 years old, and he was facing the greatest challenge of his life. God had told him to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac. It was a puzzling command. God had promised Isaac, and now He was asking for that special child to be sacrificed. What a challenge! But God had commanded it and so Abraham obeyed. He trusted God implicitly. As Hebrews 11:19 tells us, he believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead.

When they got to Mount Moriah Isaac asked his father the poignant question, ‘where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’ (v. 7). That led to Abraham’s wonderful response of faith: ‘God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering’.

Abraham’s response to Isaac was an illustration of his loving trust in God. Despite the awesome nature of God’s command, he still rested on the faithfulness of God. That faith was honoured in the most marvellous way. Isaac was spared and a substitute was provided. It is a stirring and beautiful story.

Yet there was something else very special about what happened. Abraham and Isaac saw acted out before their eyes the great truth of Christ our substitute. They may not have understood it in those terms. But what they saw was that God provided a substitute. And that speaks of Jesus. Is that part of what the Lord was referring to when he said, ‘Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad’ (John 8:56)?

Abraham named that place ‘The LORD Will Provide’ (v. 14) because he proved this truth in his greatest challenge. The Lord provides for our salvation, and He provides for our well-being in every part of life. You can always rely on Him whatever the difficulty because, through Jesus, the Lord always provides.

***‘Strength for
today and bright
hope for tomorrow’***

*From the hymn ‘Great is Thy
faithfulness’*

All May Change

'I am God, the God of your father ... I will go down to Egypt with you'
(Gen. 46:3–4).

When we are old any change is unwelcome. We love things to stay as they are. We enjoy our comfort. In particular the thought of moving house and home can be just too much. Jacob felt like that.

Up until now Jacob had known all sorts of upheavals and turmoil through his life. But he had become settled in Canaan. And then a dreadful famine had come. He sent his sons to Egypt to get grain, but that turned out to be a disaster with Simeon ending up in prison. Then came the news that Joseph, who he thought had died years before, was alive and was in charge of everything in Egypt. And Joseph wanted his father to come down to Egypt so that he could look after him. Jacob knew he had to go, but he had considerable misgivings. He was 130 years old and taking such a journey was a challenge.

At the outset of this journey he came to Beersheba and he built an altar there to seek God. He received amazing comfort. The God of his father, Isaac, would not change no

matter how circumstances changed. There was no need for anxiety and fear. Indeed God would go down into Egypt with Jacob. Everything was part of the divine purpose.

Changes may come to us and we may feel considerable anxiety and fear about them. Yet if God is in the change we must not refuse to comply. He who orders our days is the One who goes with us. That should give us courage and confidence. Let us say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid' (Heb. 13:6). He goes with us, even into today, and we may be at peace. Let us fix our eyes on Him and not our changing circumstances.

***'All may change,
but Jesus never.
Glory to His name!'***

*From the hymn 'Yesterday,
today, forever'*