

How Can I Have Faith Like Abraham (Part 2)

Faith Must Keep Moving (Slide 1)

Reading: Philippians 3:7-11

Isaiah 40:28-31 (Slide 2)

Do you not know? Have you not heard?

The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth

Does not become weary or tired.

His understanding is inscrutable. (That is, hard to define. Beyond Human reasoning or understanding)

29

He gives strength to the weary,

And to *him who* lacks might He increases power.

30 (Slide 3)

Though youths grow weary and tired,

And vigorous young men stumble badly,

31

Yet those who wait for the Lord

Will gain new strength;

They will mount up *with* wings like eagles,

They will run and not get tired,

They will walk and not become weary.

This very passage indicates not only that the Lord does not change or grow weary, but those who wait on Him, that is, trust in Him, see an increase in their faith as time goes on.

Though we don't always have an immediate answer to our prayer, nor do we have any idea when Jesus will return, those with faith are ever watchful and wait with an intense faith, waiting also, patiently. We are not soon shaken by trouble, nor with adversity. It is as though we have an insight into the faith of Abraham.

Jesus teaches in a parable regarding the Sower:

Matthew 13:3-9 (Slide 4)

3 And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; **4** and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. **5** Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. (Slide 5) **6** But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. **7** Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. **8** And others fell on the good soil and *yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. **9** He who has ears, let him hear."

Those who hear the word and allow it to be implanted in their heart, grow spiritually. They believe and follow because of faith. They are not distracted by the cares of the world nor soon discouraged to depart from the truth. They grow and grow, in faith and in the Lord.

Last week we asked the question:
How Can I have faith like Abraham?

We read in Hebrews of the magnitude of his faith:

Hebrews 11:8-10 (Slide 6)

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. **9** By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; **10** for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

We had read in our hearing regarding Abraham and his offering of Isaac.
Genesis 22

This week we want to explore the idea that if I keep moving forward with my faith, I will grow stronger in the Lord and then I am perhaps one step closer to having Faith like Abraham.

One of the most important, if not the most important elements of athletics is training. **(Slide 7)** Training, from this standpoint, is the conditioning of one's body so that the mind can use it to overcome any adversity that may hinder our ability to be successful in a given sport.

Nearly every sport, if not all sports, require the body to be physically fit in order to participate at the highest possible level. For Football, Basketball, Baseball, Tennis, Track and Field, and even Golf, running and strength training are extremely beneficial.

You see basketball teams all the time that are perhaps more athletic and more talented who get tired at the end of the game and lose the contest. They are often overwhelmed by an opponent who has properly trained physically. When they get tired the body controls their minds instead of the other way around. **(Slide 8)** When there is a stoppage in play, these athletes will bend over with their hands on their knees to catch a breath. We make our mistakes when we're tired and our body has checked out. That's true in athletics and in life.

Athletes, who have properly trained, control their bodies with their mind. **(Slide 9)** They don't get tired and they are able to think clearly under duress. In many cases, a well trained body will outperform someone who has more talent in a given sport. When they are tested, time and time again they find success.

Spiritually speaking, we exercise, that is, train our mind in His Holy Word so that we may endure the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged. In other words, we listen to our coach who Isaiah describes as one who "never gets tired."

James 1:2-3 **(Slide 10)**

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, **3** knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

The very idea that Christians will encounter various trials should cause us to prepare for them spiritually. After it's all said and done, the Christian wants to endure the trial without getting spiritually **winded**. This requires the training and exercising of our mind and putting our bodies in subjection to our minds. It requires moving forward in Faith.

Spiritual atrophy is one of our greatest eternal enemies. One cannot be prepared for trials if our mind isn't built up. I believe that Abraham constantly meditated and thought about what God said to him. His trained faith dictated his action in his obedience in offering Isaac as sacrifice. His faith moved forward.

However, you cannot move forward if you are always looking back. **(Slide 11)** The runner who doesn't focus on the finish line but constantly looks back at his opponent loses his lead.

Jesus says in Luke 9:62 **(Slide 12)**

But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Proverbs 4:25 **(Slide 13)**

Let your eyes look directly ahead

And let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you.

Paul says don't look back. Forget what's behind and move forward.

Philippians 3:12-14 **(Slide 14)**

12 Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. **13** Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to

what lies ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

If you don't think looking back is harmful, look at Lot's wife! **(Slide 15)**

God allowed the children of Israel to be captured by the Babalonians to purge those from them that looked back at the life they knew in Idolatry, purged from that remnant that looked forward in faith.

Jeremiah records in Chapter 29:11-14 **(Slide 16)**

11 For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. **12** Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. **(Slide 17)** **13** You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. **14** I will be found by you,' declares the Lord, 'and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares the Lord, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.'

So often it is Spiritual Atrophy that prevents us from moving forward and preparing for the adversity that lies before us. Trials and temptations that we encounter beset us and just like the body that fails without proper use, so will the spiritual mind that does not train and gain endurance.

Without proper training we can't move forward and our faith is weak. We will fail the test.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 **(Slide 18)**

1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. **2** I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, **3** for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

He says to them that they have not prepared themselves, they have not trained. In athletics someone else who qualifies will play in our spot while we watch from the bench.

In our Christian walk, some are so far out of shape that they have to start all over again from the basics.

Hebrews 5:12 **(Slide 19)**

12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

You cannot maintain your faith unless you are willing to move forward. The athlete cannot compete unless they are willing to put in the time to train.

Paul tells the brethren at Corinth that he does all things for the sake of the Gospel so that he can be a fellow partaker of its benefits. He does that by putting his body under subjection that is, controlling the physical and exercising his faith.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 **(Slide 20)**

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? (It's not like today's mentality where everyone gets a trophy) Run in such a way that you may win. **25** Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. **(Slide 21)** **26** Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; **27** but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Our faith must move forward but it must do so with purpose and with a destination in mind. Pauls says to run the race with the intent of winning.

(Slide 22)

Runners who run the 100 yard dash, run with such vigor and determination so that they can win the race! It's born out of the expression you see on their face and strides they take as they run to the finish line.

Move forward with purpose. In my years of playing and coaching basketball, I've seen players who have great dribbling ability but really never go anywhere. They dribble from the top of the key to the baseline and then out the other side. Their excessive dribbling causes their teammates to stand and watch. In reality, many opportunities to reach the goal are missed. Dribble with a purpose, move forward in faith with purpose.

Paul says to run the race to win, set your mind over your body so that you will have self-control. Don't let the desires of the flesh rule and disqualify you. Paul says I don't run without aim and if necessary I box to defeat the enemy so that I will not be disqualified.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 11:1 **(Slide 23)**
Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

If we are to be like Paul, our faith must move forward.

So what have we learned from this lesson: **(Slide 24)**

1. We serve a God who does not change and can supply all our spiritual needs
2. We must train our mind so that our body isn't in control
3. If we maintain our faith, it will get stronger and stronger, therefore we keep moving forward not looking back
4. We see that it's possible to have faith like Abraham

Next time we will explore "Fighting the Good Fight"

Invitation