

THE STORY OF ABRAHAM

God the Author and Perfecter of Faith



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OUTLINE

GENESIS	Age	Description
12		Call of Consecration (12:1-3)
		<i>Common Faith (NT Reference: Rom 1:19-20)</i>
	75	Abram consecrated (set apart) from his idolatrous people TEST: Trusting God for material providence (1) Unfaithful : Egypt. (2) Faithful : With Lot. (3) Faithful : With King of Sodom. (4) Faithful : With Melchizedek
GOD WAS FAITHFUL IN SETTING ABRAHAM APART. ABRAM RESPONDED IN FAITH THAT GOD IS TRUSTWORTHY		
15		Call of Acceptance (15:18-21)
		<i>Saving Faith (NT Reference: Gal 2:16)</i>
	85	Justification through faith alone TEST: Trust God only, or with meritorious works? (1) Unfaithful : Hagar. (2) Unfaithful : Sending Hagar away
GOD WAS FAITHFUL IN PROVIDING THE MEANS OF GRACE TO ABRAM. ABRAM WAS UNABLE TO MERIT ANALYTICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS		
17		Call to Obedience (17:1-16)
		<i>Serving Faith (NT Reference: Eph 2:10)</i>
	99	Call to holiness; and a change in identity (i) Abram - Abraham (ii) Sarai - Sarah. Unfaithful : Laughter and unbelief. Covenant of Circumcision and the Witness of the Nation TEST: To be a Witness to the nations (1) Unfaithful : With Abimelek. (2) Faithful : Intercession for Abimelek. (3) Faithful : Intercession for Sodom
	100	The promise Foretasted: Isaac born Hagar & Ishmael sent away
GOD WAS FAITHFUL IN CALLING ABRAHAM TO MINISTRY. ABRAHAM WAS TAUGHT TO SERVE ACCORDING TO HIS CALLING		
22		Call to Surrender (22:16-18)
		<i>Surrendered heart (NT Ref: 1 Cor 12:7-10)</i>
		The call for ultimate sacrifice: Isaac, your only son, whom you loved TEST: Would you trust Jehovah Jireh? (1) Faithful : Obedience because of faith The Promise sworn: "I swear by Myself... Surely bless you... because you have obeyed Me." Already and not yet promise of the Promised Land Continuing the Call - no pagan wife for Isaac!
	175	Abraham died
GOD WAS FAITHFUL AND WISE IN PROVIDING WHAT WAS BEST FOR ABRAHAM. ABRAHAM WAS TAUGHT TO SURRENDER HIS LIFE FULLY		
For in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed - a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith" (Rom 1:17)		

Our last lesson brought us to terah, descendant of the chosen line of Shem and the father of Abram. However, by the time we get to Terah, the picture wasn't pretty. We are told that Terah was an idol worshipper (**Jos 24:2**) despite the fact that Shem was still alive during his time (see previous lesson). Again, humanity had descended into evil; and had God not done anything, the *utter depravity* of the days of Noah would happen yet again.

So, it was in this understanding that we get to Genesis 12, wherein God called Abram to leave his city and go to where God would lead him. Note, though, that God would repeat the Promise in three other occasions (so four altogether, in Genesis 12, 15, 17 and 22 as outlined above). Why the repetition? My argument is this: The writer wants to show, that above and beyond the person of Abraham, it was really God's election and faithfulness that made it possible for Abraham to enter into a relationship with God. Despite Abram's periodical

unfaithfulness, God remained faithful, and was the one who began the good work in Abram, and completed it patiently by working all things for good.

So there is an initial faith, and God will bring this faith into more mature faith, until it reaches its climax. I have found Rev Stephen Tong's categorization to be particularly useful, so I am going to use that here and have tabulated those above: (1) Common faith (2) Saving Faith (3) Serving Faith (4) Faith to Surrender.

But what is yet more important, as we study this, is to keep in mind the significance of Abraham's life for us. Paul in the New Testament tells us that the very salvation that has come to us is in fact the very same promise given to Abraham, *"He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come through the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit... if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"* (Gal 3:14, 29). And so, we too must embark on a journey that is from faith to faith (Rom 1:17), with our Lord Jesus as the *"Author and the Perfector of our faith"* (Heb 12:2) and with the same assurance that *"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus"* (Phil 1:6).

The milestones in Abraham's life were important ones. For we could only imagine how Abraham would fare, had he been given the ultimate test of sacrificing a son that was more dear to him than life itself at the beginning of his journey of faith as opposed to when it happened. The Abraham who was afraid for his life at the thoughts of being killed by the Egyptians (and then a second time with Abimelek!) because of Sarah's beauty would in no way have been mature enough to trust God for the ultimate providence of saving Isaac. And so, every milestone, every test and every event happened not by random chance, but was God's perfect working in Abraham's life.

Abraham's story of faith is indeed a great one. But readers oft forget the greater story of the Great God who was working out a mature faith.

1. Common Faith: Consecrated from His Idolatrous People

The common faith simply says this: "God the Creator exists, and because of that, we are accountable to Him for whatever we do." This is what Paul is explaining in **Romans 1:18-32**. God's existence is unarguable, and is evident through the created world. Just as a watch cannot just come into such perfect order by having nuts and bolts being randomly thrown into the air, it is absurdity to even suggest that the infinitely more complicated yet purposeful universe comes from utter chaos. Chaos doesn't beget order, and non-life does not beget life. To think otherwise is an inexcusable absurdity that can only result from self-deception.

The very knowledge of the existence of God demands a proper response from man; and the response is that of faith and of obedience (**Heb 11: 6**). And this summarizes the story of the call of Abram. God called him, and Abram responded by obedience through faith. The simple structure of

"Many people would call this kind of faith blind, or even fanatical. But blind or fanatical faith is attributed when one acts in contrary to knowledge or in the absence of knowledge. Abram had enough knowledge to confidently act upon it: He knew God was speaking to him. And when God spoke, he obeyed. This was the logic of his faith, and it was firmly rooted upon the faithful God"



Genesis 12 is “God said go! ... So Abram went.” Sounded easy enough? Not really.

Abram was **seventy five years old** when he heard God’s call (**Gen 12:4**). Now this was way past midlife, even for those times. We know that anyone past their midlife would crave for security and stability more than anything, and a sense that they have achieved something with their lives (ever heard of midlife crisis?). The writer of Hebrews chose this very initial obedience as Abraham’s legacy of faith: “*by faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going*” (**Heb 11:8**). Many people would call this kind of faith blind, or even fanatical. But blind or fanatical faith is attributed when one acts in contrary to knowledge or in the absence of knowledge. Abram had enough knowledge to confidently act upon it: He knew that God was speaking to him. And when God spoke, he obeyed. This was the logic of his faith, and it was firmly rooted upon the faithful God!

1.1 TEST: Trusting God for Material Providence

And we will see that Abram’s life after the call was anything but stable.

In Egypt

Okay, let’s set the scene first. Here was Abram, obeying God’s call without much questioning. And what was the first thing the Bible mentioned that happened to him? This was his red carpet welcome into the life of faith: **Gen 12:10** said he was struck with (not just an ordinary famine, but) a severe famine. Let’s not talk theories now; this was real life! Not only did God not provide for Abram, he was in a very real danger of death! So much so that he had to run to Egypt to survive. Now we know that the choice of going to Egypt was not an easy one, as somehow Abram knew before he even entered that this could put his very life at stake. This was the lesser of two evils. If he had stayed, he would surely die from the famine; but if he goes, he had a chance to live. And so he went. And to stay alive, he lied. One small, little weakness in the face of grave danger. Or wait, was it even a mistake? Sarai was indeed Abram’s half-sister (something he will later reveal in **Gen 20:12**). Abram could have argued that this was a white lie, or a necessary evil, or even wisdom pure and simple. Ok, to avoid this from escalating into a premature debate on ethics, we can discuss this another time.

When put this way, Abram’s weakness is so humane. Which of us wouldn’t do what he did? I think I would fare worse! After a promise of blessing, descendants and vast land, what Abram experienced was the exact opposite. Extreme famine, barren wife and a life-threatening situation! It was not only a matter of unfulfilled promise, but apparently an exact opposite on the promises of God!

Yet is this not the very test of faith? Is faith not looking past the visible toward the realms of the invisible (**2 Cor 4:18**)? Is faith not believing God to perform the seemingly impossible (**Mat 17:20**)? So, should we not see this event as God’s training for Abram, so that he will know the fact that God does work all things for the good of those whom He has chosen?



Nonetheless, through a divine intervention, Abram was able to get out of the predicament that he got himself into. For he was in risk of losing Sarai to Pharaoh and of being unable to resume his journey out of Egypt. If that had happened (or, if things had been left to Abram's performance), that would spell the end of Abram's journey with God. But with God's intervention, Abram got out of Egypt, and in fact he got out filthy rich (**12:16, 20; 13:1-2**)!

With Lot

Because of the unfortunate incident in Egypt, Abram left with a fortune. And in **13:1-2**, we see the extent of this riches. **13:4** showed how Abram actually gave thanks to God for His providence; attributing his condition to God's divine grace. However, because Abram and Lot did not have a large piece land and pastures for their livestock, their current life of pilgrimage was not suitable for the wealth they had acquired (**13:4**).

Abram and Lot had to separate or risk further quarrels. So Abram initiated the only possible solution: to part company. But how he did it was strange. Being the older of the two, Abram should have the right to choose first where he would like to go. And any person in their right mind would have first chosen for himself a land that would be prosperous enough to sustain our own needs first. We safeguard our own possessions first, and then think of others. But Abram did the exact opposite. He let his nephew choose first where he wanted to go, and promised to head the opposite direction (**13:9**). Of course, Lot chose Sodom, a prosperous and lively city of his time. Lot chose the most logical solution. Their problem was that their lives were not settled; and so Lot chose a permanent residence. They had become very wealthy in livestock, and so a fertile land was the most sensible place.

Now, let's backup a bit. We all know this was a silly choice; in fact one of the worst. But that was because we know of the fate that would befall Sodom. But to Lot, Sodom would have been simply a bustling city which was prosperous; much akin to perhaps the modern day Las Vegas. Even the writer of Genesis had to put things into perspective by hinting in a bracket "*(this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah)*" (**13:10**). But the morality of the city was evident: "*now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord*" (**13:13**). In other words, Lot did not see the spiritual temperature of Sodom but saw instead the promising physical conditions; and made his decision based on that. His very own comments were "*Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt*" (**13:10**). Now, why would he compare the garden of the Lord to the land of Egypt? One was representative of paradise, the other would one day (if not already) be a representative of worldliness. Looks like the only thing Lot observed was the physical side of things; and not its spiritual essence. And this would prove to be to his own detriment.

A little side note though. Describing Lot this way would depict Lot as a very worldly man. But Peter in the New Testament described him as "*a righteous man*" (**2 Pet 2:7**). He would later on suffer in Sodom to preserve this righteousness. His choice was based on the wrong values; which he would pay for dearly; but his heart was in the right place.



However, describing Lot this way was necessary to make a comparison with Abram, which is what I believe the writer of Genesis tried to do. Lot chose based on what he saw. Abram's choice was sandwiched by prayers. Before the separation, Abram was calling on the name of the Lord at the place he built an altar; and after the choice, we saw Abram conversing with God and again building an altar to the Lord (13:18).

Abram had learned from his time in Egypt that he needed no one, save the Lord. That if he had God with him, then he had all he needed. The place where he would reside was of secondary importance.

With the King of Sodom

In Genesis 14, we again are given a display of Abram's character. Here, we hear of the defeat of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboyim and Zoar under the four kings, who plundered the city of its treasures and inhabitants; with its inhabitants probably taken in as slaves. When Abram heard that his nephew had been taken captive, he quickly rallied 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit (14:14), and actually managed to recover Lot and all his belongings, together with the women and the other people (14:16). He did not pause or think twice about saving his nephew who had chosen unwisely. He was moved with compassion and acted the only way he knew how.

And after the shining victory, Abram once again displayed virtue. Abram faced two kings; and responded very differently to them. To the King of Sodom, who offered Abram to take the plunder but requested for the captives, Abram refused. He refused to be identified with the King of Sodom because he did not want the king to be able to say, "I made Abram rich" (Gen 14:23). Now taking plunders in battle was common; and Abram would not have gone against custom if he had done that.

However, his refusal was perhaps indicative of a previous event. Why would Abram be concerned with people thinking that he got rich because of the King of Sodom? After all, it would have been legitimate even if he had taken the loot, for he was the one who won the battle. Looking at the context, my personal opinion is that Abram might have been rumored to have become rich through his encounter with Pharaoh. And thus, people might say that his well-being was not attributed to God as much as it was attributed to Pharaoh. And that saddened Abram, for he had wanted his life to be a testament of how good God was to him. But whether or not I was spot on on this opinion, one thing is for certain: He refused the King of Sodom outright so that his own success would only glorify One: God.

With Melchizedek

But there was another King that he met: Melchizedek king of Salem. Abram saw his position as Priest of God Most High; and immediately gave him a tenth of everything (14:20). Abram refused to take the plunder of Sodom, and then he tithed whatever remained. This again showed how Abram



cared little about gaining wealth for himself. Melchizedek blessed Abram, and that was probably worth more to him than the plunder which could have made him rich beyond his wildest dreams!

From these two instances, we could witness that Abram's dedication was never toward material wealth, but to God. And his allegiance was never to the powerful kings, but to the Servant of God. Abram lived in the Common Faith: He placed his faith in the God he knew created the universe. He desired to please him and to live by His commands. *"Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him"* (**Heb 11:6**). Abram did this exact thing. He wanted to please God; and he did this by coming to Him, believing that He exists and is rightfully Master over his life. Not by works, but with an earnest faith. And the rewards he sought was heavenly.

One important sidenote, though, that I must state. We see here the first mention of tithing in the Bible; and it took place long BEFORE the Mosaic Law was given. There was no law requiring Abram to do that. And so, I believe the practice tithing transcends the legalistic requirement of the Law of Moses. And even Jesus Christ never abolished the practice, but rather insisted that his should be done without neglecting the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness (**Mat 23:23**). Tithing was meant to be first and foremost an act of acknowledgement that ALL we possess belong to God, and so we give a tenth as an act of faith to proclaim that all we have belong to Him. God never needed anyone or anything, for He Himself created all things (see **Acts 17:24-25**). And although in the Mosaic times God would use the practice systematically to provide for the Levites who would serve as priests, it does not nullify the principle that the act itself was to be done as an acknowledgement of God's providence for our lives.

And that was what Abram did. He proved himself faithful in his material stewardship in the three events we have just witnessed: ① In allowing Lot choice, Abram believed for God to provide rather than believing in the physical land ② In refusing the King of Sodom, Abram committed his life to glorify God; so that people would see his being blessed as God's doing, not man's. ③ In giving a tenth to Melchizedek, Abram acknowledged that all he had came from God and cheerfully gave what was not required by law.

Summary: Common Faith

In conclusion, Genesis 12-14 describes to us Abram's *Common Faith*: He responded to the common knowledge that God exists, and acknowledged that in consequence he was accountable to Him (see **Rom 1:19-20**). God then taught Abram that He was indeed trustworthy, and that Abram could trust on His Word. Abrams faith pleased God because he believed that God exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him (**Heb 11:6**).

2. Saving Faith: Justification through Faith Alone

At the very start of Genesis 15, we see two things. (1) We see God who initiated the Covenant by coming to Abram in a vision. (2) We see Abram's eagerness to fulfill God's promise to him. But we also see Abram's confusion. For the promise of being made into a great nation (**12:2**) still seemed so unlikely since he was still childless. Could it have slipped God's mind? And so he inquired, *"Sovereign Lord, what can You give me since I*



remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus? You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir" (15:2-3).

The Lord answered him; and that was all it took for Abram to be convinced. "Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness" (15:6). This is the infamous statement that will inspire Paul and James when they quoted this in **Romans 4:3**, **Gal 3:6** and **Jam 2:23**. And this was the very example of faith. See, most people would say, "I'll believe it when I see it." But contrary to popular saying, seeing is not believing. (1) Sight is deceitful. (2) When you have already acquired proof, why the need for faith? Faith is faith because we have not seen what we believe. This is seen in the following argument for biblical faith:

If we believe
God, we take
Him at His word

- **Definition of faith:** "Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (**Heb 11:1**). And the fact that this is unseen is crucial, because "Hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not have, we wait for it patiently" (**Rom 8:24-25**).
- **Source of Faith:** "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ" (**Rom 10:17 ESV**)

If we continually seek proof before putting our trust in someone, we don't believe that person. Imagine going to a doctor and insisting he produces evidence after evidence that he is capable. Or imagine asking your husband or wife for evidence of faithfulness every day. Imagine going to school skeptical about what the teacher teaches. And these people whom we choose to believe everyday; these doctors, mechanics, teachers, philosophers; they are but fallible human beings! But God is absolutely and completely trustworthy; and the reason behind it is straightforward, "God is no man that he should lie, not a human being that He should change His mind" (**Num 23:19**). God is sovereign and answerable to no one. There is no reason for Him to lie. He is omnipotent and thus completely able to do as He promises. He is wise and omniscient that He will not make an ignorant mistake and later change His mind. The Covenant and promises we have in God relies on His very attributes, and therefore, we have a sure faith and a firm foundation. Because of that, when God speaks, we listen and obey. Even when listening and obeying is against the odds, we do it on the basis of faith. Abraham gave us this example. He believed "against all hope" (**Rom 4:18**), "without the weakening of his faith" (**Rom 4:19**) with unwavering faith (**Rom 4:20**) because "he was fully persuaded that God had power to do what He promised" (**Rom 4:21**). This was why Abraham became the father of all who have faith. And this illustrates how faith comes from hearing the Word of God.

And this is why biblical faith is so often contrasted to evidence or sight (though not contrasted to reason). **Heb 11:1** says that it is being certain of what we do not see. Paul put it simply "we live by faith, not by sight" (**2 Cor 5:7**). Thomas was rebuked for requiring evidence for the resurrection, and is told "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (**John 20:29**). If we believe God, we take Him at His word.

Sola Fide

Abram was declared righteous (or have righteousness credited to him) because he believed. Let us now explore why this is significant, and why this is pure grace.



Paul explained this in the whole of chapter 4 of the Book of Romans. He quoted Gen 15:6 in Rom 4:3, and explained it in great detail.

- The main point is that of grace, and not of works. In **verses 4-5**, Paul contrasted the word “credited” with the word “wages” and argued that wages are given to those deserving, because of their accomplished work. Credit is given apart from works.
- It was given before Abram obeyed what would later become the requirement of circumcision (**v. 10**). Therefore, grace is prior to law; and therefore is given apart from the law – but rather through faith (**v. 13**)

And this was not only an explanation Paul made up. Genesis 15 (and later on 17) confirms it. When Abram enquired God, what God had him to do in **Gen 15:9-21** what rather strange. Historians would identify this to be the format of a Suzerain-Vassal treaty of the Ancient Near East culture. This is a common treaty back then, which Was an agreement between a greater king (the Suzerain) and the lesser king (the Vassal). It is normally done as a treaty of protection (by the Suzerain) in exchange for submission (by the Vassal).

Grace must precede response, because man is not able

The treaty is done with the very requirement Abram was asked to do. Animals are to be cut in half and the halves put in opposite sides. The vassal will then walk in between the carcasses, signifying his fate if he were to break the treaty. Imagine what Abram must have thought when God asked him to arrange such ritual. He would have thought that he was expected to walk in between the carcasses and swear allegiance to God. But what happened afterward is incredible to say the least. God, in the form of a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces (**Gen 5:17**) thereby sealing the covenant not by making Abram promise obedience, but by God Himself promising to be faithful. Abram must have felt a huge relief. But above and beyond that, he must have felt awe and reverence for what God had done.

Grace must precede response, because man is not able. As the Psalmist put it, *“If You, O LORD should mark iniquities, O LORD, who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness, that you may be feared”* (**Ps 130:3-4**). Our response to grace must be that of awe and reverence; not a taking for granted. If we who claim to have understood grace take it as a license for immorality (**Jude 1:4**), then we have not truly understood grace and may not have been credited with righteousness or salvation to begin with.

I will explain Genesis 17 in a moment, but it is important to make a prior statement that salvation by grace alone does not in any way mean that we are not required to do good works. Rather, to the contrary, grace should lead to works. James makes it very clear that faith without works is dead (**James 2:26**). And this is why, after stating the covenant this way in Genesis 15, without requiring works on Abram’s part, God will reconfirm the Covenant again in Genesis 17, with the requirement for obedience through circumcision.

2.1 TEST: *Sola Fide*, or through Meritous Works also?

Right after the giving of the Covenant in Genesis 15, **Genesis 16** talks about another famous story: Hagar and Ishmael. Now, we need to note at the very least that Sarai’s suggestion was a common practice of those times. The practice of surrogacy (with a certain ritual to be conducted) meant that Sarai could have her child through Hagar. It was not supposed to be Hagar’s, but rather Sarai’s.



Sarai's intent was clear "*I can build my family through her (Hagar)*" (**Gen 16:2**). Now, this is what they might have thought, "God has kept us from having children. Perhaps He intended that we should not only wait for things to happen, but should act upon it as well. After all, God helps those who help themselves." Was it understandable? Well, yes. That was an accepted practice of the Ancient Near East culture. We, in our modern age, are often guilty of no less. We justify white lies as necessary. We change our gospel to suit the times. We bribe officials because we think there is no other way to get things done (the Indonesians who are the original audience of this lesson would identify with this). But being understandable doesn't make it right. I only put the case forward so that we don't think we can fare better than Abram did.

But right after pronouncing a covenant that depended solely on God's faithfulness alone (and not on Abram's meritorious works to attain it), we see Abram succumbing to the temptation of "helping God out." He didn't get it then (although understandably enough; after all, it had been 10 years after the initial promise!).

Hagar despised Sarai, perhaps wanting a certain position in the household. Who knows, she could be made second wife. And if she was wed, with the first wife barren, all this could work out for her benefit after all. And so Sarai confronted Abram, and mistreated Hagar in such a way that she fled.

Those are the common soap opera type of story. But what happened next would be downright weird if they were to make a movie out of it. Hagar fled because she was mistreated, but the Angel of the Lord said this to her in the desert, "*Go back to your mistress and submit to her*" (**6:9**). Now, the expected response would be this, "but Lord, did you not hear why I ran? I ran because I was mistreated very badly. Why would you ask me to return to this mistress? This is against human rights! (or whatever it was called back then)." Why would she willingly go back to be mistreated?

To understand this, we must read into what was implied. When the Angel of the Lord spoke, Hagar gave a name to the Lord, "*You are the God who sees me*" (**6:13**). And later on, Abram would name the child Ishmael, which means "God hears." So it seemed that Hagar was happy to go back to Abram because the Lord acknowledges her sufferings and comforted her. Is this not often the case? We would be able to endure the greatest suffering if we know its purpose, and if we know we are in the right hands. Hagar realized she was in God's hands, and she submitted.

However, we must read between the lines if we are to know the intent of the story. It was not Hagar who gave the name Ishmael; it was Abram. So Abram was the one who realized through the boy that God was indeed listening. He knew what had transpired, and how Abram had tried to take matters into his own hands, and made a mess out of it. God knew how Sarai mistreated Hagar, and He listened to Hagar's cries. "God hears" became the name of the boy, a testament of the weakness of Abram in his life of faith.



Summary: Saving Faith

Abram was a great man; but as you can see, he wasn't perfect. And imperfection would not merit God's salvation. So herein we have a problem; and that is that no one left to fend for himself would attain salvation. That was the reason salvation had to be by faith; and there had to be a promised Messiah who would die in our place as propitiation for your sins. Indeed, *"if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"* (**Gal 2:21**).

It was therefore because of Abram's lack of understanding in this regard that caused him to be too eager to accomplish God's plan for him in his own way. Going to Hagar was also reflective of Abram and Sarai's thoughts that they had to merit the covenant; that that had to help God out somehow. And if we know our history, we'd this one act of the flesh brought great troubles, right to the present age. It was in referring to this event (**Gal 3:6** refers to **Gen 15:6**) that Paul explained to the Galatians that they cannot add to that which had been begun in the spirit by works of the flesh (**Gal 3:3**). In his ignorance, Abram tried to do that. But God was faithful to Abram and did not reject him because of it.

