

What's the most precious thing you have? IPHONE? IPAD? Wedding ring? House? While those things may seem quite valuable to us now they won't last forever. Therefore the most precious thing we have is our faith, for even if we should lose everything else but still have faith, we're guaranteed to have an awesome eternity. This morning with the help of Abram, the Father of the Faithful, we're going to examine this multi-faceted jewel called faith.

Abram, or Abraham as he would come to be known later on, is not unfamiliar to us Christians. It was he who was chosen to be the father of God's special people, the Jews. The Jews are special, not because they are more righteous than everyone else, but because through them God brought the Savior into the world. How did Abram come to receive this special privilege of being the forefather of the Savior? Let's find out.

In the first verse of our text we hear God say to Abram: "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). The way God dealt with Abram is typical of the way that he deals with all sinners. If contact between God and sinner is to be established, God has to make the first move. Therefore one facet of faith is that it is a gift from God. Had God not come to Abram, Abram would never have believed in him. The same was true of the Disciples, for Jesus declared, "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16a).

Why would God choose to give faith to Abram? Was he better than everyone else around him? No, not exactly. In fact we're told that Abram's father, Terah, worshipped idols (Joshua 24:2)! Although we can't say for certain that Abram too worshipped these idols, God intervened in his life so that he wouldn't follow in his father's footsteps. What moved God to do this? His undeserved love for sinners. Paul said it best to the Roman Christians, "[salvation] does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy" (Rom. 9:16). The same thing, of course, can be said about us. If God had not graciously used our parents, grandparents, or friends to bring us into contact with his Word, we would still be lost and condemned sinners.

The second thing we'll discover about faith is that it is not blind, nor is it, as the author Samuel Butler said, "a kind of a betting or speculation." When God told Abram to go to a land he would tell him about Abram went, not because he felt this was the right thing to do, but because God had given him a cluster of awesome promises. God said to Abram, "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:2, 3).

Faith is a certain confidence based on the rock solid promises of God who never lies. In that way Christianity is truly unique. When God wants to move us to action he does so not by demanding, but by promising. For example when God tells us not to be afraid he doesn't just command it, but promises to protect and provide for us thereby giving us a reason not to be afraid. Therefore when we base our faith on our feelings we're on thin ice. True faith is founded on God's promises and nothing else. That's why it's important for us to stay connected to God's Word because it's there that we find those promises.

Although the promises God made to Abram may not seem like any of the promises God has given to us, the Apostle Paul pointed out in our Epistle lesson how Abram was saved in the same way we are – through faith in the Saviour. Jesus even said of Abram, "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). What Jesus said of course is true because when God promised Abram that all

peoples on earth would be blessed through him, that was a reference to the blessings that Jesus would bring for all people. I suppose we could also say, therefore, that faith is a “classic.” It saved not only Abram, but also all Old Testament believers and it continues to lead to salvation today.

Since faith is based on God’s powerful Word it’s not surprising to see that it is active. Martin Luther once said, “Faith does not sit on the heart like foam on beer.” Abram’s faith was certainly active for he responded to God’s call. “So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. 5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there” (Gen. 12:4, 5).

Just as Abram’s faith itself was a gift from God, his response was also something that God engineered. Jesus once said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). It was God’s promises that empowered Abram to do great things like leave his country, his home, and most of his family even though he was already 75 years old, and had no idea where he was going!

God’s promises still move his people to do great things. How is it that you can remain strong when a loved one seems to be on her last leg here on earth? How can you remain confident in life when you suffer the loss of a child? How can you remain optimistic when your own health is failing? You can because of the strength that God gives us through his Word. If you’ve ever been envious of Abram’s faith, wishing you could trust as he did, you can! Firmly plant your faith in the Word and you will do great things as Abram did.

To make our faith stronger God exercises it. He did that with Abram for when Abram arrived in Canaan, Moses records that there were Canaanites in the land (Gen. 12:6b). That little piece of information tells us that God hadn’t brought Abram to an empty piece of real-estate he could just take over. There were people already living in Canaan! God did this so that Abram would be forced to rely on his promise that his descendants would inherit the land.

God still puts his people in situations where they are forced to rely on his promises. He does this so that we won’t just have a head knowledge of his faithfulness but so that we can “taste and see” for ourselves that the Lord is good. Therefore when the Lord puts you in such a situation thank him for the opportunity to exercise your faith, and look forward to seeing how God will keep all of his promises to you.

The final facet of faith we want to focus on is how faith is public. Moses writes, “7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. 8 From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD” (Gen. 12:7, 8).

When Abram arrived in Canaan he didn’t hide the fact that he worshipped a different God than the Canaanites. He even built a couple of altars and there not only prayed to God, but proclaimed his name sharing it with others.

Faith leads us to do the same thing when we gather here on a Sunday morning for worship. Our cars outside testify to those who drive by that there is something important going on in here. When we speak of God’s love for us even in the face of difficulty we also provide a witness to our faith. Since God has given us this wonderful gift of faith don’t hide

it but proclaim it for that is what God has called us to do and will give us the strength to do it!

So what is the most precious thing that you have? It is your faith of course. Faith is a multi-faceted jewel that shines ever so beautifully and brightly the more God polishes it through his Word and experience. Cherish your faith because it is the only thing you have the will translate into an inheritance that will never perish, spoil or fade. Amen.