

Thought For The Week

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Abram's Faith: The Journey of Faith

Lessons from Abraham & Biblical Teachings on True Belief

Faith is a cornerstone of Christian doctrine, yet its true nature often eludes modern believers. In a thought-provoking sermon delivered by preacher Steve Cain, the concept of biblical faith is dissected with clarity and depth, drawing from key scriptures in James, Hebrews, and the Old Testament narrative of Abraham. Cain's message underscores that faith is not a passive acknowledgment of God's existence but an active, deed-accompanied confidence in His promises. Through divine intervention, providence, and preservation, God cultivates this faith in believers, much as He did with Abraham. This article expands on Cain's sermon, exploring its themes, biblical foundations, and practical implications for contemporary life.

The sermon opens with readings from James 1:2-8 and James 2:14-17, setting the stage for a discussion on trials, wisdom, and the inseparability of faith and works. In the first reading, James encourages believers to "count it all joy" amid trials, as they produce patience and maturity. Lacking wisdom? Ask God in faith, without doubting, for doubters are unstable like waves tossed by the wind. This establishes faith as steadfast trust, not wavering uncertainty.

The second reading drives home the sermon's core: "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?" (James 2:14, NIV). Cain echoes this, questioning the utility of faith devoid of action. He illustrates with the hypothetical of a needy brother or sister dismissed with mere words—"Go in peace; keep warm and well fed"—without providing aid. Such faith is "dead" (James 2:17). Cain clarifies that "deeds" here aren't limited to charity like visiting nursing homes or feeding the poor, though those matter. Instead, they encompass obedient responses to God's commands, demonstrating genuine belief.

Transitioning to Hebrews 11, Cain poses a foundational question: "What pleases God?" The answer lies in verse 6: "And 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." This faith pleased Enoch, who walked with God and was taken without tasting death. Cain stresses context: faith involves believing God "is" and actively seeking Him as a rewarder. It's not abstract; it's relational and expectant.

Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as "confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." Cain elaborates on this hope: eternal life with God, judgment without blemish, sins cleansed through Jesus' sacrifice. God promises this, and since He cannot lie, believers can rest assured. Yet, assurance demands action—faith and deeds working together, as James later affirms using Abraham as an example.

Cain's sermon pivots to Abraham, portraying him as a case study in faith development. Contrary to

idealized views, Abraham's journey began with imperfect belief. In Genesis 12, God calls Abram (later Abraham) from Ur of the Chaldees: "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you" (Genesis 12:1, NIV). God's proposition: "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you... All peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (verses 2-3). This mirrors Jesus' teachings in Matthew 6: don't worry about food, clothing, or shelter—God provides.

Yet, Abram's response reveals nascent faith. He leaves but takes nephew Lot and delays in Haran until his father dies, defying God's call to solitude. Arriving in Canaan, famine drives him to Egypt, where fear overrides trust. He instructs Sarah to pose as his sister, fearing Pharaoh's men would kill him for her beauty. "Where's Abram's faith?" Cain asks. God promised protection—"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse"—but Abram schemes for self-preservation. Pharaoh takes Sarah, but God intervenes with plagues, exposing the lie and preserving them. This divine intervention begins building Abram's trust.

In Genesis 15, childless Abram confronts God: despite promises of descendants, he has none. God reaffirms, pointing to stars: "So shall your offspring be" (Genesis 15:5). Scripture notes Abram "believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (verse 6). Yet, doubt lingers. Sarah, barren, suggests Hagar as a surrogate, birthing Ishmael—a human workaround, not God's plan.

Later, in Genesis 18, three visitors (angels) promise Sarah a son within a year. Overhearing, she laughs: at 90, conception seems impossible. Cain highlights this: "Where's the faith? Let's be realistic." But God rebukes, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14). Isaac's birth fulfills the promise, earning him the title "child of promise." Still, Abraham falters again in Philistia (Genesis 20), repeating the sister deception with Abimelek. God intervenes once more, warning the king in a dream.

These episodes illustrate Cain's theme: faith grows through experience, not innate strength. God uses trials—famine, fear, barrenness—to foster reliance. Romans 1 supports this: all have experienced God's invisible qualities through creation, leaving no excuse for unbelief. God works in everyone's life, even non-believers, drawing them toward faith (Acts 17: Paul's Athens sermon).

Cain interweaves a New Testament parallel from Mark 9:14-27. A father brings his demon-possessed son to Jesus' disciples, who fail to exorcise the spirit. Desperate, he tells Jesus, "If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." Jesus retorts, "If you can? Everything is possible for one who believes." The father cries, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" Cain sees this as many Christians' state: intellectual belief without full assurance. The father hoped for healing but lacked confidence, approaching it as "an exercise." Jesus heals the boy, showing God's power to bolster weak faith.

This leads to the sermon's climax: Genesis 22, Abraham's ultimate test. God commands: "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and... sacrifice him there as a burnt offering" (verse 2). By now, God's repeated interventions have matured Abraham's faith. Early the next morning, he obeys without hesitation, loading wood and traveling three days. To servants: "Stay here... We will worship and then **we will come back to you**" (verse 5, emphasis added). To Isaac, questioning the lamb: "**God himself will provide**" (verse 8).

At the altar, Abraham binds Isaac and raises the knife. An angel stops him: "Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son" (verse 12). A ram appears—God

provides. James 2:21-23 cites this: Abraham's faith and actions worked together; his faith was completed by deeds, fulfilling "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." He became God's friend.

Cain emphasizes: deeds reveal faith. Abraham's obedience wasn't blind; it stemmed from experiential trust in God's providence. Similarly, Rahab's actions (hiding spies) demonstrated faith. Faith alone? Insufficient—even demons believe and shudder (James 2:19).

Applying this, Cain outlines God's expectations: Believe He exists and rewards seekers (Hebrews 11:6). Acknowledge sin's separation (Isaiah 59:2) and God's reconciliatory outreach through Jesus. Faith accepts Jesus as the atoning sacrifice, high priest, and sole path to salvation (Acts 4:12). This culminates in baptism for sin remission (Acts 2:38), allowing Jesus to present us blameless.

Many deem this "unrealistic," but Cain urges response. Like the father's plea, God helps overcome unbelief through life's interventions—the job, health, relationships—all divine workings. Do we see His hand?

In conclusion, Cain's sermon challenges: Faith develops amid trials, proven by deeds. Abraham's evolution from doubter to exemplar shows God's patience in building belief. For believers today, it's a call to active faith: trust God's promises, obey His commands, and experience His providence. This leads to eternal hope—life with God, spotless through Christ. If unconvinced, heed the invitation: believe, repent, be baptized, and let God cultivate your faith.

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Abram's Faith

Developing Biblical Faith Through Divine Intervention

In a compelling sermon on faith, preacher Steve Cain explores the essence of biblical faith, drawing from James, Hebrews, and the life of Abraham. Faith, he asserts, is not mere intellectual assent but a confident assurance in God's promises, accompanied by actions that demonstrate belief.

Cain begins with Hebrews 11:6, emphasizing that pleasing God requires faith in His existence and His role as a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Faith is "confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1, NIV). This hope centers on eternal life with God, made possible through Jesus' sacrifice, which cleanses us from sin and presents us blameless.

Referencing James 2:14-17, Cain highlights that faith without deeds is dead. He clarifies that "deeds" refer to obedient actions rooted in trust, not just charitable acts. Using Abraham as a model, Cain illustrates how God cultivated faith through experiences. Initially, Abraham (then Abram) showed weak faith: he took Lot despite God's command to leave alone, lied about Sarah in Egypt out of fear, and doubted God's promise of a child due to age.

Through divine intervention, providence, and preservation, God built Abraham's trust. In Egypt and Philistia, God protected them despite Abraham's failings. He reiterated promises, showing stars as symbols of descendants. Sarah's laughter at the promise of Isaac revealed lingering doubt, but Isaac's birth as the "child of promise" strengthened belief.

The pinnacle is Genesis 22: Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, trusting God to provide. His words to servants—"we will come back"—and to Isaac—"God himself will provide"—demonstrate matured faith. God intervenes, affirming Abraham's righteousness through deeds.

Cain parallels this with Mark 9: the father's plea, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief," reflects many Christians. God answers such prayers, working in lives to foster 100% trust.

Ultimately, God expects faith that acknowledges sin's separation, accepts Jesus' atonement, and responds through baptism for forgiveness. Cain invites listeners to embrace this faith, leading to reconciliation with God.

This sermon reminds us: true faith grows through trials and obedience, yielding eternal rewards.

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