

# But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good,

Genesis 50:20

In order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive, how many of us could see it as Joseph did, not holding a grudge but instead realizing the hand of God was the power and purpose behind all that transpired?

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Genesis 22:7-10: But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!”

And he said, “Here I am, my son.”

Then he said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”

8 And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” So the two of them went together.

9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

What did Abraham understand that brought about such strong faith that he was prepared to sacrifice Isaac? Faith gave Abraham reason. As we go back to Genesis 21:12, God said, “**in Isaac your seed shall be called.**”

It seems like such a tiny mention to see Abraham place so much faith into an action that would take the life of this long-awaited and promised child. I have thought of this over and over for years, I don’t think there can be anything in life that can bring a parent more pain and questioning than losing a child. According to verse 22:1, “**God tested Abraham**”. In life, we often fail to see faith tested by far too frequently feeling sorry for ourselves as though we did nothing to deserve this. As we come to know and understand God closer and better, we can look back over the years and see some of those tests, and when we do, we can ask ourselves how we did? Through faith, believing, trust, and prayer, God delivers the strength to get through.

The actual account of Abraham’s faith is found in **Hebrews 11:8: By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.** (NKJV) As he stepped out, he still struggled with placing both faith and trust in God’s hand when in Egypt, not trusting in God but intentionally deceiving the Pharaoh. Abraham’s action demonstrates a couple of things to us. Yes, he received the gift of faith, and exercised it when he

stepped out, and it was accredited, but was he fully surrendered and obedient? Our observation here should be about waiting on God. Faith here stands alone, minus trust and belief, showing us the process of Abraham's growth. Because faith, a gift from God, is our focus in these verses, something is lacking to render both belief and trust. Many people say they have faith and they believe in God, but their actions demonstrate something different. Look here at **Hebrews 11:7: righteousness which is according to faith**. This does not mean that all we need to do is have faith and we will be God's righteous. No, faith must produce works and those works of faith stand to the believer's witness. Faith calls for action as we find here with Abraham.

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*The partial obedience of Abraham highlights the character of Abraham, as a man who has faith in the God of the Bible, but who is a bit reluctant to follow through on everything God asks him to do. In many ways, the story of Abraham mirrors the story of Israel as a nation. Yes, Israel as a nation is the people of God, set aside for a purpose, in particular for bringing the Messiah into the world. And yet, Israel often fails miserably in being fully obedient to that very calling.<sup>1</sup>*

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**Hebrews 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. (NKJV)**

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What about Noah? The earth had never witnessed a flood like that in Noah's time. If I were a bystander, I would most likely question Noah's sanity also. Not only was it a boat that people didn't understand its purpose, it was a BIG boat. I listened to a discussion once where the people discussing Bible verses assessed that Noah's boat was unreasonable to believe because he had no means to steer it. I would have thought that faith and the fact that Noah didn't know where he was headed, should tell us that God was in control, and that the entire earth was underwater, Noah didn't need to control it, it just needed to float.

**Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (NKJV)**

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- 1) Paul – Faith over Past Convictions, Acts 27:23-25.
- 2) Joshua – Faith over Insecurities. Hebrews 11:30.
- 3) Caleb – Faith over Bad Reports, Numbers 14:6-9.

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<https://sharedveracity.net/2019/01/11/did-abraham-receive-the-call-to-go-to-canaan-while-in-haran-or-in-ur/>

- 4) Joseph – Faith over Death, Hebrews 11:22
- 5) Moses – Faith over Glory, Hebrews 11:24-27
- 6) David – Faith over Giants, 1 Samuel 17:37
- 7) Stephen – Faith over Justice, Acts 6:5
- 8) Daniel – Faith over Life, Daniel 6:21-24
- 9) The Centurion – Faith over Barriers, Matthew 8:8-10

As we read the Scripture, we find many others who demonstrated their faith, such as Jeremiah, locked up for telling the truth, Rahab who lied to protect the spies. The point I want to make is in nearly all of these we find growth in faith, it was not instantaneous, Abraham left, but he did not leave all of his family, he took Lot and his family. David stumbled numerous times yet God still said he was a man after His heart.

We grow in faith, but I have come to realize that the process of sanctification that comes with it is not by the snap of a finger. We will continue to grow, and for most, we will never achieve all the knowledge of God that we do through our studies.

One of the first issues I like to address is, you say, But someone will say, **'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.'** James 2:18. James makes an excellent observation in **verse 2:20, "But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?"**

In the verses shown we have been looking at faith, but we must ask ourselves, what are we doing with that faith? I believe James is correct; unfortunately, people mix up works and works of faith. They do not know if you are prompting yourself to do good works to earn favor in our Lord, then you are looking at things backwards. Learn to let God direct your path and make straight your steps. God will prompt every believer to want to do works such as helping others, and sharing the Gospel through word and action. How will you respond to all God asks of you?

Let's examine our lives using a scale. We have read about the men of faith, who resemble men in general regarding our faith practices. Now, we will go a bit deeper. There are ways to see our faults and God's grace. Let us not forget that it is through grace that God gives us faith.

We will start our journey as children. The scale is balanced not because any are without sin but because although we are born sinful, the newborn has not committed a sin as of yet. This is not by choice, for the newborn is unable to act. That does not mean we are sinless when born, but soon, we will show our sinfulness in action. We sin because we are sinners.

Let's look at the scale and those things that add weight upon us as we travel the road of this life. You say you have faith, yet you hold bitterness and grudges, these things separate us from God. You struggle to forgive, **Matthew 6:14: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.** Can I still prove my faith

and be saved if I am not forgiven? You carry the hurt and memories of the past that act as a sore that never heals. In life, when this happens, you go to the doctor; it is no different from letting go of past hurts; however, in this case, Jesus says bring it to Him. **Matthew 11:28. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

1 Corinthians 13:5 ends the sentence with evil, **KJV, NKJV: Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;** Other versions say, **It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.** Although the wording is different, the implication is the same, you carry a weight you need not carry, here prayer is necessary, it will only be through prayer that this stain is removed. In my own life, I have had struggles with this, for years I prayed God would remove my inability to let go of insults and words to hurt, and not allow them to continue affecting my growth. He has been faithful. Pride was the reason I received insult and hurt, I allowed it to insult me. That pride had to be removed, it is a power we hand over to Satan and others when we have an attitude of pride, as a shield, no one has the right to challenge me, it is the opposite of humility, and it prevents us from being all God has planned for us.

Look here at how these words are defined,

**Faith** – Pistis, Faith is in general the persuasion of the mind that a certain statement is true (Phl 1:27; 2Th 2:13). Its primary idea is trust. A thing is true, and therefore worthy of trust. It admits of many degrees up to full assurance of faith, in accordance with the evidence on which it rests.<sup>2</sup> (conviction of the truth of anything, belief; in the NT of a conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervour born of faith and joined with it **relating to God** the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ, **relating to Christ** a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God.<sup>3</sup>

**Trust** – elpizō, in a religious sense, to wait for salvation with joy and full confidence. Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.<sup>4</sup> This is to be a sign of your faith, or faith in action, and a point at which we should look at the depth of our own ability to trust. Years ago I wrote a song after evaluating my walk with our Lord and the chorus went, “I didn’t know You, like I should, I didn’t trust You as I could, but when times were troubled I’d call Your name, Jesus

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<https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/Dictionary/viewTopic.cfm?topic=ET0001302.IT0003351.NT0001783.TT0000191.VT0000987>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4102/nkjv/tr/0-1/>

<sup>4</sup> Warrick, Tony. Bible Scriptures by Topic: A Quick Reference Guide to Bible Verses (p. 648). Kindle Edition.

please from down on my knees, and hang my head in shame.” I had faith but it was a toss-up as to who I had more faith in, God or me? When I looked back, I could begin to see God having more strength than I ever could. God has the strength to change all who seek His plans for us, to prosper us and

**Believe** – Pisteuo - to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to credit, place confidence in of the thing believed to credit, have confidence. In a moral or religious reference used in the of the conviction and trust to which a man is impelled by a certain inner and higher prerogative and law of soul to trust in Jesus or God as able to aid either in obtaining or in doing something: saving faith, mere acknowledgment of some fact or event: intellectual faith, to entrust a thing to one, i.e. his fidelity, to be entrusted with a thing. <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4100/nkjv/tr/0-1/>