

Book of Hebrews Part 42: Champions of the Faith - Abraham

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The following text is a message from Corner Fringe Ministries that was presented by Daniel Joseph. The original presentation can be viewed at <https://cornerfringe.com/media/49ppz62/book-of-hebrews-part-42>.

***Portions of this document have been edited from the video message to better present a comprehensive, written document. Special attention was given to preserve the original context, but this document is not verbatim. Scripture verses are in the red text with other quotes in blue. Therefore, it is recommended that this document is printed in color. The Hebrew words are generally accompanied by the transliterate, English word. In most cases, the Hebrew is to be read from right to left.**

We are currently in the eleventh chapter of this epistle to the Hebrews. We've been going through this very special list of very special people, these titans, and champions of the faith. Thus far we've covered Abel, Enoch and Noah. We are going to cover the fourth person on this list today. But before we do, I want to go back and borrow the disclaimer from last week. We're going to be bouncing around a lot. We're going to be all over the place and I want to make sure you don't get distracted. We are going to be going to the Apocrypha, looking at multiple books in the Apocrypha to get a little bit of insight from it. We are going to be looking at Philo, a Jewish philosopher and prolific Jewish exegete. And of course, we're going to be going to all different parts of scripture. I don't want you to get too distracted. I want you to stay with me. By the time we get done, hopefully this will all make sense.

With that said, let me introduce the next person on the list with the following: This particular individual is absolutely in a league by himself. He's unique in every way. He merits special attention.

In fact, I can tell you the writer of Hebrews recognizes this. There's a reason he actually invests ten times the ink with this man compared with any of the other people mentioned in Hebrews 11. In other words, he spends roughly ten times the amount of time talking about this man in comparison to any of the other men. So this is someone we want to pay attention to. There is a heavy emphasis upon him and this person is Abraham.

Abraham, some people call him Father Abraham, some of us grew up in Sunday school and sang the song Father Abraham had many sons, etc. He is known as the father of the faith. By the time we get done today, you will see he merits that honorable title. He really does.

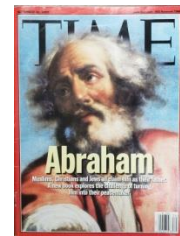
I want to open up today by taking you to the Apocrypha. You can find the very same type of structure that the writer uses in Hebrews chapter 11. It's kind of the sister of it. We're going to the book of Sirach. I want to show you how Sirach opens up in regard to Abraham to get a feel for just how special he is. It says this, **Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations, and no one has been found like him in glory** (Sirach 44:19). That's a weighty statement. The writer is very clear, of all the righteous men who have lived, he puts Abraham in a category all by himself. How can he do that? What makes Abraham so special?

I'll tell you. Heritage. Identity. Promise. Inheritance. All of these things are what make Abraham so special. In fact, what you realize when you go to John chapter 8 is when the Jews are dialoguing with Yeshua, they name-drop. Do you know who we are? Abraham is our father. They take their identity

back to him. They were descendants of Abraham. Do you know what it means to be a descendant of Abraham? It means you're somebody. You're not just anybody, you are chosen. The promises that were given to Abraham are yours. The blessings which were given to Abraham are yours. If you are Abraham's descendants, the inheritance that was promised to him is yours.

This is very, very significant. Now it gets even better because what we discover is that this whole thing is not confined to the Jewish physical descendants of Abraham. This honorable blessing would extend to the entire world and we see this in Genesis 17:5, **No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.** God Himself comes and changes his name to adapt to what He would do through Abraham. No other man can make this claim of what God did through Abraham, but Abraham alone. He is literally going to have descendants all over the world. That is mind-blowing.

Every time I talk about Abraham, this always comes to my mind. In 2002, I saw a Time Magazine and on the cover it said Abraham and the subtext reads - Muslims, Christians and Jews all claim him as their father. Think about this. Let's put this into context. If you take Islam, Christianity and Judaism, do you know that right now, the numbers of them are well over 4 billion people living today? There's only 7.8 billion people on the Earth. You know what that means? That means one out of every two people is proclaiming Abraham is their father. One out of every two people in this world. Think about that.



Is this what the text of Genesis is talking about? Abraham was to be a father of many nations. But what you don't see in the text is that he would be the father of many religions. So the question becomes: who are Abraham's children? Who are they? Because they are all claiming Abraham as their father. This is their claim to fame. Isn't it interesting he's the one? It all begins with Abraham.

Muslims say Abraham is our father. You can go to Hebron in Israel and there is a battle there. Muslims believe Hebron is a Muslim holy site and there should be no Jews in Hebron whatsoever. Hebron is where the Tomb of the Patriarchs is. This is where Abraham and Sarah lie. There's this battle. You can even look at Jerusalem. It's divided. Christian quarter. Muslim quarter. Jewish quarter. There's this total battle because they are all vying that they're descendants of Abraham. That's what establishes them.

So who are the children of Abraham? It's interesting because Paul raises this issue and he answers it, **Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham** (Galatians 3:7). Only people of faith are sons of Abraham. Now if I was to just isolate this statement, and I just took what is said here and lop off that it comes from Galatians and just take Paul's words, I could stick them on Islam. Because Islam believes you have to believe. You have to have faith. There is no other way than through faith. I could put those words on Judaism. Judaism will tell you the same thing. You have to have faith. There's no other way. I can apply this to Christianity. It will tell you the same thing.

So what is Paul referring to? Paul is very specific. Look what he says here in verse 29, **And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise** (Galatians 3:29). That's how we know. It is very specific to define who really is a child of Abraham. Everyone is claiming him as their father, but it has to be not just faith, but faith in Yeshua that He is the Son of God. That the Father raised Him from the dead to atone for your sins. That He sits at the right hand and He's coming back for you. This is what we have to believe. Take this and bring it into Islam. How does that work? Take this and bring it into Judaism. How does that work?

I want to take this a step further because this next passage I'm going to show you is really significant for the totality of today's message. We get to see Abraham's faith and what Abraham's faith really looked like. Defining what faith is according to scripture. You've heard me use this term, I like to use it: the structure of the faith. Meaning faith is not simply a concept that stays in my head. No, it has obedience. It has action. That is how we know we have true faith.

Listen to Yeshua's words. He says this, **They [the Jews] answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father."** [this is their identity] **Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham** (John 8:39). So this gets into genetics. We need to know genetically speaking do we belong to Abraham? That means you have to step back and say do I look like Father Abraham? Do I bear his characteristics?

When you have children, your children bear your characteristics. That's genetics. They possess your mannerisms, likes and dislikes of certain foods and stuff. All of this comes down through genetics. You know your parents.

How many of you have heard a tragic story at some point in your life, and I actually just heard one a couple months ago, but I've heard several over my lifetime, where parents have lost their child at a very young age, two to five years old, to child abduction or some other way. They've lost their child and 15 plus years later they are still being very proactive. They are still looking for their child and rightfully so. And you hear in some of these stories where someone comes in, they read the story and say I'm going to go and I'm going to claim them as my parents. And they do. This happens, they come and they do this. But then they do a paternity test, then they check the genetics and they say you are not ours. You may say, well, that's really demented that someone would do that, but I want you to think about why would they do it? Why are they seeking to do that? Because they see the benefits of being able to be associated with those parents, whether financial or emotional, they want to be part of their family.

What I'm telling you is there are going to be a lot of imposters and there are a lot of imposters who say they are part of Abraham and Sarah. We are part of their family. Make no mistake. There is going to be a test done. The genetics are going to be determined and it is whether you have faith in Yeshua and you are keeping His commandments or not. That is the genetic test. It's going to come out. You're not going to be able to avoid it. You can't fool your way through this, you are not going to be able to pretend. That will only go so far and then it will be over.

With that said, I want to break into Hebrews and this is what we read in Hebrews 11:8, **By faith Abraham obeyed...**, I want you to think about how the writer of Hebrews opens up with Abraham, by faith he obeyed. He's showing the structure of the faith. The product of faith is obedience. So, **By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance.** (emphasis added). What is interesting to me is the writer doesn't start with that prolific passage that we all know, Genesis 15:5-6 **Then He (the Lord) brought him (Abraham) outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."** ⁶ **And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.**

Abraham believed in his heart. There's nothing else behind it. It was just simply Abraham looking at the stars, God said what He said and God peered into his heart and He recognized Abraham actually believed Him. One would think that the writer of Hebrews would begin there. He doesn't. The writer actually begins back in Genesis 11. To further help you to understand the reality of what the writer is

bringing to the table, I want to take you back there. We're going to really appreciate what Abraham's faith looks like.

This is what we read in Genesis 11:27-28, **This is the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot.**²⁸ **And Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans** (emphasis added). Something that you need to understand right here is Abraham's native hometown where his ancestors dwelt was in Ur of the Chaldeans. Why is this significant? Do you know what this land is also called in the Bible? Babylon.

This is Babylon. His hometown where his ancestors dwell, where Abraham is dwelling, is Babylon. Isn't that interesting? So as God is calling Abraham out, He's calling him out of Babylon, literally. This gets interesting when we see the entire world has received this calling, Revelation 18:4, **And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her (Babylon), my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues** (emphasis added). The very same calling that was given to Abraham is being declared today in the gospel of the Messiah Yeshua. The very same call. It's interesting. Those who are Abraham's children, they will do as Abraham did. They will heed the calling and they will come forth.

Let me take this a step further because you really need to understand the context of where Abraham is coming from. Joshua says this in Joshua 24:2, **And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods.** (emphasis added) Do you understand what Joshua just said? Abraham's family, including Abraham, were worshipping demons in Babylon. Now, this is not typically the context of things that we think about when Abraham comes to mind and understandably so, but this is the reality. Joshua brings this reality to the children of Israel and says do not forget our fathers, where it all began. He goes back, as he should, to Abraham worshipping demons in Babylon.

Now to help you understand the context even further let's go back to the Apocrypha. I want to take you to the book of Judith. What we are going to be looking at, to set the stage, is the general for the king of Assyria, this great Assyrian army, he hears about Israel mounting for war and he's angry, so he calls the leaders of Moab and the Ammonites and he says "tell me who are these people". So one of the leaders of the Ammonites comes on the scene and he says this, listen to this, **These people are descended from the Chaldeans.**⁷ **At one time they lived in Mesopotamia, because they did not wish to follow the gods of their ancestors who were in Chaldea** (Judith 5:6-7). Isn't that interesting? There came a moment in time, as Abraham is dwelling in the midst of pure paganism and demonic worship and his whole family is engulfed in it, there came a time of revelation. He didn't want to do that anymore. We get more information as we continue, **Since they had abandoned the ways of their ancestors, and worshiped the God of heaven, the God they had come to know, their ancestors drove them out from the presence of their gods. So they fled to Mesopotamia, and lived there for a long time** (emphasis added, Judith 5:8). Isn't that fascinating? Here they are dwelling in the midst of the pit of hell, in Babylon, worshipping demons, and by the mercy of God the Gospel comes to Abraham and he receives it. Abraham receives the God of heaven and what does he do? He abandons the other gods. This doesn't go over well with Babylon. This doesn't go over well with his ancestors. They're offended, because you can't have oil and water. They're not going to mix. You can't have the righteous and the wicked together. They're literally pushing him out. They want nothing to do with this.

I just have to share this with you. It's one of those revelations you have in Israel, when you go to Israel. I went to the Israel Museum and one of the things which I was dumbfounded and very troubled by is all

the gods they dig up in the land and now they're on display. They put them in glass cases. They look all decorated. They're everywhere, countless numbers of gods. It's incredible to think about how all these religions with all the gods, all over the world from generation after generation, they all have images. Physical, tangible images they can see, they can touch, they can relate to, they can bow and prostrate before, they can kiss, they can honor, and they can adore. They can see them. Abraham had that and he gave that up for a God he could not see. Walk by faith, not by sight. Our God doesn't allow an image because He wants His children to walk by faith. That's an incredible thought.

We go on, **Then their God commanded them to leave the place where they were living...** Interesting, as they're offended, you can see there's a war between good and evil. They don't want any part of it. Then God tells them to get out and leave the place they were living, **...and go to the land of Canaan. There they settled, and grew very prosperous in gold and silver and very much livestock** (Judith 5:9). This is important backdrop so you can understand what Abraham was going through. We need to think about these details to identify with him and what his faith really looked like.

With that said, let's go back to Genesis 11:29-31, **Then Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai,...** Now keep in mind, Abram's name would change to Abraham because he's the father of many nations. So would Sarai's name. She went from Sarai to Sarah. **...and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah.** ³⁰ **But Sarai was barren; she had no child.** ³¹ **And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there** (emphasis added). Here is

what it looks like on a map. The lower circle is the Ur of the Chaldeans. The area of the Chaldeans is much bigger than what I have circled, but they go up from the Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran, the second circle. Now what you're going to find in the story, and we will go through this, but Nahor and Milcah will stay in Haran. This will be their land, their home. They give birth to a son, some of you know, Bethuel, who is the father of Rebecca and Laban. This is where Abraham is going to send his servant, to go to his family to get a wife, a bride, for his son, Isaac.



Let's go on to Genesis 12:1, **Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.** If you want to appreciate what kind of faith Abraham really had, then you are going to have to appreciate what is being asked of him. He is being asked to leave his country. He is being asked to leave his family, his father's house. Keep in mind, this would include any inheritance that he had coming to him land wise. He would have to walk away.

I wonder how many of you could do that. If God asked you to do that, how many of you could walk away from your family, could walk away from the comfort and support you're accustomed to? How many of you would begin to mourn God's command, His call? How many of you would fight it? How many of you would make excuses? Think of Yeshua's illustration in Luke 14 where He made the call for the people to come, that all things are ready, please come. One guy had bought a piece of land. He said I'm too busy. I've just bought a piece of land. I've got things going on. I can't leave this land. I can't do it. Another guy was busy with the five yoke of oxen. In other words, he's got a new business, saying I'm

sorry, I can't receive this calling right now because I'm too busy with my business. My business is demanding of me. I've got to focus on this. I'm sorry, I'm going to have to take a pass on this.

Abraham doesn't hesitate. He immediately answers the call. The fact that he is willing to do this is not the only impressive thing. What's impressive to me is how he receives the call, in other words, I want to show you his heart because that is what's imperative. Do you want to know why God chose him to be the father of many nations? Why He would choose Abraham to bring the Deliverer, the Redeemer of the entire world, through him, through his lineage? You need to know this man's heart and to help you appreciate this I'm going to take you to Philo, a first century, prolific Jewish exegete. Listen to what he says. This is an amazing commentary, [Abraham being impressed by an oracle by which he was commanded to leave his country, and his kindred, and his father's house, and to emigrate like a man returning from a foreign land to his own country, and not like one who was about to set out from his own land to settle in a foreign district](#). Do you understand what he just said? This is amazing! What he is saying is when God asked Abraham to come out from his family, from his own house, from his own inheritance, Abraham didn't look at it and think I'm losing all this. He actually looked at it as I'm a foreigner where I'm at and I need to go home.

Talk about a renewing of the mind. Typically we would flip that upside down and we would mourn, we would be upset, complaining, not trusting in God. Do you know where Abraham's home is? It's in the commandment of God, wherever God says, that is where Abraham is going. If God commands, he goes there, his home is there. The home is where the heart is and His heart is with the Lord. Think about these things. Abraham, his attitude, his heart is a cut above the grade. The way he looked at this. This is how God wants us to follow His commandments, with this same attitude, with this same perspective. Not, oh now I have to keep Shabbat holy, I can't go out and work. Now I'm losing money.

No, the spirit of Abraham, the heart of Abraham says, I'm so thankful God has revealed this to me. That I can come into His Holiness, that He even called me. I'm not worthy. It's a completely different mentality.

You'll know who you are. Just do a little genetic test. Do you do the deeds of Abraham? Do you have the attitude Abraham had?

Philo continues on, [Abraham hastened eagerly on, thinking to do with promptness what he was commanded to do \[and it\] was equivalent to perfecting the matter](#) (Philo of Alexandria, *On Abraham*). In other words, what Philo is saying is that when Abraham was given the command he did not waste time. He made haste. He didn't hesitate. He didn't ponder it asking himself is this really the thing that I want to do? He moved with urgency because his only desire, his only concern, was to honor the Lord.

Yeshua says this; tell me who this sounds like in Matthew 16:24, **Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.** This sounds like Abraham. Isn't that interesting? Only sons of Abraham are going to inherit the kingdom of God and here Yeshua goes out with the word that you need to be like Abraham. This is what Abraham did. If you are descendants of Abraham, you will do what Abraham did. You will forsake all. Abraham forsook everything for the Lord.

Matthew 10:34-37 says, **"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.** Interesting. What was the commentary we read as Abraham was in Ur of the Chaldeans

with all his ancestors? His home was divided. They pushed him out. They hated him. ³⁵ **For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; ³⁶ and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'** ³⁷ **He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.** What did Abraham do? Nothing got in his way of obeying God's call. Nothing.

Yeshua says in Luke 14:33, **So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.** This was Abraham. This was Abraham's faith. Do you understand what faith has to look like? It has to forsake everything. Everything in this world that you might love.

Now going back to Genesis we continue on in Genesis 12:1, **Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you** (emphasis added). Not a land that I have shown you or a land that you can see a far off in the distance. No, trust Me on this one, Abraham, just go to this land and you'll get there at some point. Look at what the writer of Hebrews says because he picks up on this thread here, **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** (emphasis added, Hebrews 11:8). For you control freaks this doesn't work. It needs to be mapped out. You want to know how many Caribous are on the way to your destination. Is there proper lodging, are there accommodations, are there all these things?

Abraham had no idea. You want to talk about faith. He had to fully trust in the Lord, that the Lord loved him, He knew what was best for him, and He would care for him. Talk about freedom and liberty to walk in Christ! This is freedom. Abraham is an anomaly. He has this blessed liberty and freedom to just walk with the Lord, and with that walk comes peace and shalom and happiness. This is where joy comes in.

You will have joy when you walk like Abraham, you will never have joy trying to cling onto the things of the world. They will consume you. They will eat you alive until you are dead. They will leave you for dead. The strings that the world has in your heart just keep tugging at you. Abraham cut off everything. He was a total pagan, in Babylon, worshipping demons and he cut it all off. He was totally redeemed, sold out and radical for the Lord. That is where it is at.

Continuing with Hebrews 11:9, **By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;** You cannot be serious. Did you just pick up on that? So let me get this straight, God takes Abraham and says, hey I'm going to take you to the promised land of your inheritance, you know, that you're going to see it at some point. Abraham doesn't have a clue where he is going. Then he gets there and now he lives here as a foreigner!? This was supposed to be the promised land. Are you with me? Do you see what the writer just did? This is an incredible thing. Abraham gets to this land of promise, totally trusting in the Lord, and yet he's not going to live in it as though it is. He is going to live in it as a foreigner. Why?

Well, look at this as we continue to Hebrews 11:10, **for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.** That's why. Abraham understood what God promised him goes way beyond the physical land, that's why he didn't live there as a native, as a citizen. Abraham, in his own land, the very land promised to him, and the patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, after him, they didn't live as citizens. They lived as strangers, because Abraham knew what he was promised, this wasn't it. It was way beyond this, it wasn't temporal, and it wasn't earthly. He was promised eternity. He was promised

a place the enemy could not rise against him. He was promised a place of total peace and shalom. He was promised a place with riches of the kingdom of God. This is an amazing thing.

Moving on to the next verse, Hebrew 11:11, **By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.** The writer takes a brief moment to bring Abraham's wife into the picture. Rightfully so, because she is the mother of nations, right? So, he takes this brief break, he brings Sarah to the table, and he actually begins the verse with, **By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed.** Now, you need to understand when you get into the scholarly round, there are all sorts of interesting conversations happening. In the past, some scholars have even tried to play with the Greek and go as far as to say, well, Sarah wasn't in the original text. She was added later. We have no proof of this, I love this when you get into these debates, there is not one man who has any proof of the claim that Sarah was ever not there. She is in every text. But why are they doing this? Why are the scholars going after this? They're going after this because when you go back and read Genesis 18, how do you turn that into a passage of faith? Because when God conveys to Abraham that his wife is going to conceive, we are told her response was laughter. She laughed within herself. She laughed. She thought it was utterly ridiculous.

You have to look at it from Sarah's perspective. In the prime of her life when she was supposed to bear children, she couldn't bear children, but now she's past the time to bear children. It's an impossibility. This is a physical impossibility that is going to happen. So when the Lord says what He says and Sarah is like wow, that's a good one, the scholars wrestle with that. They look at this passage and it looks clear on the surface, so they wrestle with how did the writer of Hebrews walk away with a statement of faith out of that?

I am going to tell you first and foremost, the writer of Hebrews, has proven himself inspired by the Holy Spirit time and time again. This guy is a master. What he saw in this passage is so authentic and true. It is important that you understand what he is saying is truth. Go back and read Genesis 18. I didn't put this passage up today. I changed today's message so much, I didn't put it up, but go home and read Genesis 18. What you will find is this situation, where the Lord comes, it's Yeshua, and He talks to Abraham. He tells him your wife is going to conceive. What the text says specifically, read this for yourself, it says that she laughed **within herself**. Meaning nobody could hear her. It was not a known thing. Do you know what the next thing the Lord said was? He said, why did Sarah laugh? He peered into her heart and she trembled.

How did it go when Yeshua spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well? She came away saying He is the Messiah. There wasn't a question in her mind. He told her all the things that were in her life. Her faith was off the charts. She knew He was the Messiah. This is the type of thing that happened with Sarah. The Lord peered into her heart. She couldn't believe it. He saw exactly how she felt and what she thought about the deal. He calls her on the carpet for it and from that very moment, she strengthened herself in faith to conceive. **By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed.** This is the reality.

Continuing on, Hebrews 11:12-13, **Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude--innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. ¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises,...** think about that. He promised Abraham, but he did not receive it. Abraham and Sarah did not receive it and we will dig into this more later on. I'm not going to unpack this too much right now, **...but having seen them afar off were assured of them,**

embraced them and **confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth** (emphasis added). They are confessing they are strangers and pilgrims because, as I mentioned before, they understood their citizenship was elsewhere. It is in the kingdom of heaven.

Now listen to what the writer says next, Hebrews 11:14, **For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.** If we declare this, not just in confession, but in action, then we are children of Abraham. Then we are sons and daughters of Sarah. That is when this happens.

Hebrews 11:15, **And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.** In other words, if they're going to pull a Lot's wife where she was spared, shown the mercy of God, taken out, but guess what, she looked back and she lost everything. She mourned over what she left. This is the opposite of Abraham and Sarah. Lot's wife was mourning, "I love my home, I love this area. I love this land. I love being here. I don't want to leave". Mourning over what she had lost. She looked back at it all yearning for what she was leaving instead of having her heart in the commandment of God. So this is what we see here **...they would have had opportunity to return.** But they didn't go back. They didn't pull a Lot's wife.

Hebrews 11:16, **But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.** Think about that. **Therefore God is not ashamed.** If we're not confessing this. If our life doesn't resemble this. If we are not living like we want nothing to do with the world, then God is going to be ashamed of us. This is terrifying to me.

I love what Paul says in Galatians 4:25-26 **for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—** Nothing has changed since the days that Paul lived. Jerusalem is in bondage. ²⁶ **but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.** Isn't it interesting that Abraham's heart, what he knew, what he confessed, is the exact same thing the Apostle Paul is confessing? This is all I need in order to know Paul is truly a son of Abraham. He looks like him. He talks like him. He acts like him. Paul is a true descendant of Abraham.

Hebrew 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,** ¹⁸ **of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called,"** ¹⁹ **concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense** (emphasis added). This whole passage is absolutely amazing. You have to go back to Genesis 15 to appreciate Genesis 22 and the *Akedah*, the binding of Isaac.

In Genesis 15:5-6, **Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."** ⁶ **And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.** It was accounted to him for righteousness. Now this is an amazing thought because the writer is bringing up Genesis chapter 22 here and I'm corresponding it to chapter 15. So in the context of chapter 15 it's a done deal. The interesting thing about it and this is what I want you to see as we go to chapter 22. This is going to bring this all together, Genesis 22:16-18, **and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son,** ¹⁷ **blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.** ¹⁸ **In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice"** (emphasis added). Let me put this together for you. Everything God said here was set back in Genesis 15 - I'm going to multiply you. Count the stars. You're going to be blessed. This is going to be your descendants. Abraham believed God in his heart and it's

accounted to him for righteousness. But that's not the end of the story. God goes on to test him. Do you know that this would have never happened, despite what Genesis 15:6 says and the Lord telling him that this was going to happen? It would have never fully come to fruition unless Abraham passed the test. So do you understand what the structure of the faith is? When you come into the faith, it is the conceptual faith, the faith that believes, that drives you. Then it drives you to obedience. But you need to understand, when you make that commitment to the Lord He is going to test you. He will certainly test you.

Look at the children of Israel. The blood of the Lamb has shed. The children of Israel are literally released from the bondage of Egypt. They are driven out because of the blood of the Lamb. God shows mercy, spares their firstborn. They cross the Red Sea. Do they enter Canaan immediately? No, they don't enter into Canaan. Where did they go? He brought them into a dreadful and terrible wilderness. This is after they have been delivered by the blood of the Lamb. So you have to understand the structure of the faith. Faith doesn't end simply with you believing; there has to be something behind it. God took them and He tested them and what do we know? Many of them did not make it, they failed. They never entered into the promised land. The only ones that did were the ones that passed the test. Two people out of 600,000.

This very scenario can go all the way back to Abraham. This is what God asked him. Look at the context, God asked him to do something that is unimaginable. Who could give their first born, their only begotten. I mean, it actually says your only begotten son. This is the son he cherished. This is the one God said the promise is going to come through. The command of God did not make any sense. This was bizarre. There's no possible way you could understand this, but I love what the writer of Hebrews says. It didn't matter. Abraham didn't care if it made sense or not. He knew God promised it's going to come through Isaac. God is able to raise him from the dead. Abraham's faith was so strong, he was like, even if I kill him I know God can raise him from the dead and He will confirm His promise. That is ultimate faith. That is an unhinged faith. That is a faith without limitations.

Again, you see Abraham's heart. All he cares about is running with the commandment of God, fully trusting in the Lord, even when he doesn't understand. You may not understand the commandments of God. Why does God want me not to eat pork? It may not make sense to you. It doesn't matter if it makes sense to you. You bear the heart of Abraham. God says don't do this, then you stay away from this. He says do this, then this is where you go. It's just that simple. It was that simple for Abraham. It came down to obedience. His faith showed. Faith is not something you just hear, it's something you see. You will know them by their fruits. The fruit is what you see. You see fruit being borne on a tree.

Let me take you to Genesis 26:4-5, **And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; ⁵ because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws** (emphasis added). So here the Lord is speaking to Isaac. He says I'm going to establish you. I'm going to establish your descendants for all time because Abraham obeyed me. That's faith. He obeyed me.

That's not something we typically hear today in the church. We typically hear all you need to do is say a prayer. You don't really need to alter your life. We don't want to make you uncomfortable in any way. Don't worry about changing. But that's not faith. That has nothing to do with faith; that's a convenient confession versus sacrificial obedience.

James says this in James 2:21-22, **Was not Abraham our father justified by works...** who preaches like this? Nobody. Nobody is talking like this today. Justified by works? I'd have a cane catch me by my neck and get pulled off the stage if I preached this in any church. This concept is anathema. The thought of it is repugnant ... **when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?** ²² **Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?** Faith is made whole, it's made complete. You may proclaim you love Jesus, but for that to really take root and for it to mean something, you will walk it out and you will follow Him. We are called to be doers of the word, not hearers only.

James 2:23, **And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."** Do you see what James just did? He went back to Genesis 15 and to what God told Abraham, that, hey, your descendants are going to be as the stars of the sky. This is My promise to you. James saw this in Genesis 15 was fulfilled in Genesis 22. This was not fulfilled until Genesis 22 where Abraham walked out the Commandment of God at all costs, willing to give up everything. Abraham didn't love his son or daughter more than the Lord. He loved the Lord above all things.

The scariest part is if you don't come to that level, you're not going to make it. We have to be descendants of Abraham and if we are, we will do what Abraham did. This is a high calling. This is humbling, foremost to me, because this is the bar we have to hit.

I want to finish this verse off. He says this at the end **...And he was called the friend of God** (emphasis added). This is what we want. If there is anything you want in life, this is what you want to be called. What is friendship? Friends are close with each other. Friends spend time with one another. Friends don't just spend time with one another, they specifically make time because they want to spend time with one another. This is a friendship. This is what Abraham and God had. Friends are people you trust. Friends open up to one another. Do you want to know what it really means to be a friend of God? Look at what Yeshua says here in John 8:56, **Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.**" First thing I can tell you is Abraham knew Yeshua. Second, Yeshua revealed what He was going to do far off into the future and Abraham rejoiced to see it. He saw it and was glad. He was rejoiced in the coming of the Son of God. This revelation only happened because he was friends.

Let me take you to the Apocrypha, 2 Esdras 3:13, **And when they were committing iniquity in your sight, you chose for yourself one of them, whose name was Abraham; ¹⁴ you loved him, and to him alone you revealed the end of the times, secretly by night** (emphasis added). See, and stick with me for a second, the Lord is cagey. He is not going to reveal Himself to just anyone. The only ones the Lord is going to open up to are His friends. His authentic servants, the ones closest to Him. To those He will open up.

I love what Yeshua says. Look at this, He is talking to His disciples in John 15:14-15, **You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.** Abraham was a friend of God because he obeyed God and he obeyed God because he believed Him. He had faith. That faith promoted obedience. That obedience created a friendship. This is what it's about. With all due respect obedience is not legalism. It's called friendship. Something I want. I want friendship. He goes on, ¹⁵ **No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you** (emphasis added). They were friends because Yeshua opened up and revealed things He wouldn't reveal to others. I think of the times Yeshua's disciples say to Him, "why do you speak to them in parables"? And He answers because to you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, not to them. They were His friends. I think of Matthew 11:25 **... "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.** Friends of God.