



Amen: Abraham and Active Faith

Message by Pastor Andrew Kulasingham 5th April 2020

Hi everyone. I trust you are all looking after yourselves and it is well with your body, soul and spirit.

Last week we looked at the passage in Isaiah 7:1-9, and saw the importance of looking at our circumstances through the lenses of faith and not the lenses of fear. We saw that faith and fear are similar because they both are influenced by the unknown. Faith and fear are significantly different because they both see the unknown through different lenses. When we allow fear to have the last word, we tend to see everything through the lenses of fear. When we allow faith to have the last word, we see things from a God perspective. Faith does not ignore the facts, but a faith response seeks a God perspective before proceeding with action.

We focused on Isaiah 7:9b (NLT) *“Unless your faith is firm, I cannot make you stand firm”*. This *verse* provided us with a crucial principle on how to walk by faith and not by sight. It taught us the importance of nourishing and sustaining our faith continuously, to enable the promises of God to be established in our lives.

It is not sufficient to merely agree with God’s promises. Of course we first need to agree with Scriptures. Agreeing is to embrace and to align our thoughts to the Word of God. That is saying Amen to His word. But amen also includes the idea of nurturing, nourishing, building and supporting this Word that has been planted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

This new way of thinking you now have embraced according to God’s promises must be lived out until we see our breakthrough.

We also saw Paul’s exhortation in 2 Corinthians 1:20 that Jesus Christ has fulfilled all God’s promises by saying AMEN on the cross. Now our Amen needs to come forth through believing in what Christ has done on the cross, taking every promise, saying “Yes” and “Amen” to it, living and walking in it until we see the fulfillment of those promises in our lives.

Today, we look at another use of the word Amen. This time in the life of Abraham. We will see how this life of nurturing and sustaining faith is crucial if we want to see God’s promises established in our lives.

I have entitled my message – **Amen: Abraham and Active Faith.**

Let us go to Genesis chapter 15 and if you would please join me as I read from the Holy Scriptures.

Genesis 15:1-6

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”

² But Abram said, “Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ Then Abram said, “Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!”

⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.” ⁵ 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.

The immediate context, of course, is Genesis 14. We see the story of Abraham’s victory over an allied army and freeing the captives of Sodom which included his nephew Lot. Chapter 14 tells us how with only a small army of 318 men, God gave Abraham an unbelievable victory over an allied force of 4 nations.

We are also told that Abraham meets a larger than life figure Melchizedek who, later in Hebrews chapter 7, is presented as a type of Jesus Christ our Lord. We see Abraham having intimate communion with this “King of Righteousness”, “King of Peace” and “Priest of the Most High God”. He receives a blessing from Melchizedek and confidently refuses any compensation from the King of Sodom. Abraham says to the King: **“I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from what belongs to you. Otherwise you might say, ‘I am the one who made Abram rich.’”** (Genesis 14:23 (NLT)).

Coming out of this amazing experience, a victory and a divine encounter, we now come to chapter 15. Bridging chapter 14 to chapter 15 is the phrase “some time later”. Time had passed between the amazing experiences Abraham had to the text we are about to explore.

Genesis 15:1 (NLT) **Some time later, the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.”**

FEAR FOCUSES ON HUMAN FRAILTY

Do not be afraid, Abram.” – The reason why God would say to Abram – “do not be afraid” must surely be because Abram was afraid. After all the victories that have come Abram’s way, after all the encounters he has had with the Lord, the fact still remained, Abram was still without a son. As time went on, and the promise of God was nowhere in sight – fear began to present itself to Abram.

Verse 2 makes it clear where the fear was coming from

Genesis 15:2 (NLT) **But Abram replied, “O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son?”**

Abram responds honestly to God - "You've given me wealth, You've given me victories, You've given me amazing experiences with you...but... I don't have a son. You've given me no children"

FEAR FOCUSES ON HUMAN FRAILTY. FEAR ALWAYS SPEAKS FROM THE PLACE OF LACK. It sees through the lenses of human frailty and human limitation.

FEAR FOCUSES ON THE HUMAN AND DISCOUNTS THE DIVINE.

Sometime later...

- Hours turned to days, and days turned to months, and months turned to years – fear got a grip on Abram and he stopped believing the promise of God.

"Abram your reward will be great" – ah, not sure about that – I don't have, you have not given me.

Where is your focus today? On what has not happened?

That healing has not happened, that financial breakthrough has not come, that relationship is not restored

I don't have, God; you've not come through.

Stop focusing on what has not happened. I'm not asking you to ignore the facts. (They aren't the complete facts anyway). It wasn't for Abraham and it isn't for you.

I'm inviting you to stop focusing on what has not happened. The place of lack, along with the feeling of uncertainty creates the environment for fear to thrive.

FAITH HOWEVER FOCUSES ON GOD POSSIBILITIES

This is what we want to look at today. We want to make 3 important observations as we look at this passage of Scripture and see how Abram shifted his focus from fear to faith.

Shifting focus from fear to faith - 3 things that bring that shift

1. The first thing that happened was Abram heard afresh.

God said to Abram –

(NLT) I will protect you, and your reward will be great."

"you will have a son of your own who will be your heir."

THE REMEDY FOR FEAR IS HEARING THE VOICE OF GOD.

Faith comes from hearing, and hearing the Word of God. Abraham needed to hear from God afresh.

Focus on hearing God -

(NLT) Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, I will greatly reward you ... you will have a son of your own

In the midst of the noise and clanging cymbals of fear – the only way to silence that noise to hear the word of God afresh.

Not an old dry understanding of scripture. Not regurgitating an old verse you memorized 10 years ago. To go afresh, with an open heart, and ask the Holy Spirit to speak again through the written word of God.

In the stillness, in the quiet– hear the voice of your saviour again

Sitting in a in a cold, dreary and leaky basement in Pitman, New Jersey, Austin Miles penned this beautiful hymn:

I come to the garden alone
while the dew is still on the roses,
And the voice I hear falling on my ear,
The Son of God discloses

And He walks with me and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am his own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.

Oh, my friend – in the midst of that cold, dreary and leaky basement of fear, doubt, and uncertainty – the Lord invites you to hear him afresh.

THE REMEDY FOR FEAR IS HEARING THE VOICE OF GOD.

Abram heard the voice of God afresh.

2. The second thing that shifted Abram from fear to faith was – God caused Abram to See anew.

He heard afresh and now he sees anew.

Genesis 15:5 (NLT) **Then the Lord took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!”**

The Lord took Abram outside.

Step outside your circumstance, step outside your diagnosis, step outside your situation, step outside the mind-set fear has created – and see from God’s perspective.

The Lord showed Abram the heavens – Look up - see the stars – now every time you look up to heaven Abram – remember this – count the stars – that’s the number of your descendants.

Paul’s prayer for the church in Ephesians 1:17-19 (NKJV)

...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.

Paul is praying for the reader to see anew – get the God perspective – not see through the lenses of our limitations, not see our brokenness, not see our lack, our inability, our dysfunction

...but that you will see...

...the exceeding greatness of **His** power toward us who believe

...according to the working of **His** mighty power.

Abram heard the voice of God afresh, and he saw anew with a God perspective.

We are looking at 3 things that will bring a shift from fear to faith – hear afresh from God, see anew the God possibilities, and then this all important point – believe – believe that He will do what He said He would do.

3. Thirdly, Abram believed

Genesis 15:6 (NLT) **And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.**

The word “believed” – is the Hebrew word “*aman*” – that word amen again.

Abraham amen-ed God’s promise – He heard God afresh, He saw the God possibilities anew, and then He “amen-ed” it.

Remember from last week – we saw the word “*aman*” means “to build up, to support; to foster, to nurse.”

He amen-ed the fresh word, he amen-ed the new perspective, he nurtured it, he nourished, he built on it, he supported it.

Hear Paul’s take on this: Turn with me to Romans chapter 4 verses 18-22

Romans 4:18-22 (NLT) **Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!” And Abraham’s faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb. Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous.**

What Paul was saying is – in spite of the circumstances he went through – Abraham kept nourishing the God perspective; in spite of the things he went through Abraham went back to God’s promise and God’s ability to do it.

Now listen very carefully or you will miss the whole point of today’s message.

The Abraham story is not a fairy tale story; it doesn’t end at chapter 15 “and Abraham lived happily ever after.” No, in fact quite the opposite.

Immediately after this passage we read the Ishmael story If ever there was a monumental mistake – here it is. At the urging of his wife, he sleeps with Sarai’s servant and produces a son – Ishmael. -You would think, “That’s it. This surely disqualifies him.

This must be the final blow.” But no – he looks up to the stars – remembers God’s promise – kept believing, sustaining that faith.

Goes through the painful separation from Ishmael – doesn’t give up, kept sustaining his faith. Looks up, sees the stars, remembers the promise. Kept the faith.

In some more encounters with God, he intercedes for the lives of Lot’s family, experiences a devastating famine where he lies to save his life, nearly losing his wife in the process. Looks up, sees the stars, reminds himself of God’s promise. Keeps the faith.

Now he is ninety nine and as good as dead.

The Bible says - Abraham’s faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb. Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous.

I don’t know how far away is your Isaac. I don’t know how many more days, or months or years before you see your promise. But I know beyond a shadow of a doubt God is no liar. IF he promised you, then he will make it happen. You must believe.

Before I close I must go back to our text in Genesis 15:6 (NLT)

And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.

Now that word “counted” – the Lord *counted* him as righteous – is the Hebrew word *ḥāšab* - which means to plait, to weave.

Now look at this picture – Abraham believes – he amens – he sustains his belief, he nourishes it. Every time fear came knocking, every time doubt tried to sneak in, he heard afresh, he saw anew and he amended again. As he Amened God’s promise, God was weaving his Amens into a beautiful tapestry of righteous living.

Abraham’s Amen., God’s weaving – brings Abraham to the point where fear could no longer exist because he was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises.

So my dear brother, my dear sister, Is fear present?

Then hear afresh. Go back and remember God’s promises. Take time to hear Him afresh.

Step outside your environment of fear. Let the Holy Spirit cause you to see anew - give you a new perspective of God possibilities.

And most of all – Aman – believe – sustain what you believe, nourish what you believe, be like Abraham – keep convincing yourself that God is able to do whatever he promises.

And see what God does for you. Not just faith – but active faith. A faith that doesn’t weaken but is strengthened every day. A faith that is Never wavering but always being nourished. A faith that is constantly being sustained and growing stronger. A faith that is convinced that God and God and God alone is able to do whatever he promises.

Don’t just have faith. Have active faith.