

Just What is Faith?

There was once a man who was to be the symbolic, if not real, ancestor of designated followers of the Lord God Almighty. In fact, this lying adulterer who married his sister⁴ would actually bless the whole world; hence, his name was changed from Abram to Abraham.

- Q Who holds Abraham even more dear than pre-Christ believers, modern Jewish believers and Christians? Why?
- Q Who was almost sacrificed on the mountain by Abraham in the Quran?
- Q So, what's Abraham got to do with us?

Well, Paul, concerned about the churches in Galatia said this about the nature of faith and its role in the relationship with the Lord God:

Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. ²⁴So the law was put in charge to lead us to the Christ that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

[Why? Because...]

²⁶You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into the Christ have clothed yourselves with the Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to the Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. –Galatians 3:23-29

- Q Why did Paul argue that those who were “in Christ Jesus,” who “belong to the Christ,” are a descendant of this lying adulterer who married his sister; i.e., descendants of this man, Abraham?

So, just how did Abraham teach the Lord God about “faith?” Just to be clear, let's define our terms. Faith is not some deep theological construct which lots of professors, theologians and others have developed to create arguments among the followers of the Christ. Biblical faith is simply trust, period, end of sentence. The Hebrews writer provided this operationalization of trust (faith)—FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR, THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN.

Ergo, trust in the Lord God provides substance to our hope for purpose, substance for our hope in the people we love, and substance for the hope of sentience. Therefore, trust in the Lord God provides heuristically the evidence for God's existence, God's revelation, and evidence of the perfection of said revelation. In other words, we assume (i.e., have “faith”):

- (1) God exists;
- (2) He reveals Himself, and
- (3) Being God, He reveals Himself perfectly.

Just as scientists “assume,” believers “trust” (have faith). Faith [trust] is a fundamental foundation stone for sentient inquiry into the nature of ourselves and the Creator.

⁴Scripture is sometimes denigrated because it contains “merely tales, ancient texts rendered by people, and is clearly not ‘God given.’” When you encounter this doubt, consider how you would have redacted/edited the narratives regarding Bible heroes: the adulterous Abraham, the murderer Moses, the murderer David, the doubting Thomas, and the disloyal coward Peter? As a former journal editor, I would edited all the material which puts a bad light on these heroes, but I am not Holy Spirit—He tells the truth, even (especially) when it hurts.

How and what did Abraham teach the Lord God about "faith?"

1. Why would the Lord God "test" Abraham?
 - ⌘ Adam-like behavior—choosing the wife over the Lord God?
 - ⌘ Lying to protect, instead of trusting (having faith) in the Lord God?
 - ⌘ _____
2. Just what is the significance of a "burnt" offering? What do we call such a complete offering today?
3. How many people went up toward the mountain with Abraham? How many went to "the place?"
4. What pronoun did Abraham use regarding his return from the mountain?
5. How big was Isaac?
6. Why was a lamb used for such a sacrifice to the Lord God?
7. Why did Abraham reach out to kill Isaac with a knife?
8. Who called out to Abraham to stop him from killing Isaac?
9. What did the Lord God learn from Abraham about faith [trust]?

Explicit trust: _____

Experiential trust: _____

NT Greek for Faith:

πίστις

"pistis" ⇔ epistemology⁵

GENESIS 22:1-12

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

²Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

³Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

⁶Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

⁸Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

⁹When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

¹²"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

⁵The word epistemology is derived from the ancient Greek epistēmē, meaning "knowledge, understanding, skill, scientific knowledge."