

In Defense of Biblical Christianity

Article 4

Romans 4:3 /Gen 15:6- Abraham Believed God

“The Gnostic Faith Heresy”

A Paper

By

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This apologetic paper is the fourth of a series of articles called “In Defense of Biblical Christianity.” I will be challenging false doctrines that have infiltrated, subverted, and perverted the truth of Biblical Christianity.

Apologetic Preface

The following phrase, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness (Rom 4:3) (NIV), has been so distorted by modern theologians that biblical faith has been reduced to nothing more than a gnostic heresy. What is at stake here is the very foundation of the gospel that must be defended.

Romans 4 and related texts from the Book of Genesis, Galatians and James will provide the basis of this apologetic challenge to the heresy I have called “The Gnostic Faith Heresy.”

The gnostic interpretation of faith can be traced to before Augustine and was revived by modern-day theologians in the Dark Ages. It has continued to flourish in reformed and other evangelical denominations.

I will prove beyond all reasonable doubt what biblical faith is and, in doing so, will invalidate the interpretation of modern-day heretics.

The gnostic faith preachers are constantly calling out preachers of the prosperity gospel and the word of faith as heretics, and rightly so. But they are equally in error.

This I Intend to Prove From the Scripture

Do I have your attention?

Introduction

The defence of Biblical Faith begins with a look at our main text, Romans 4:1-5 (NIV), cited below.

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, **discovered in this matter**? 2 If, in fact, Abraham was **justified by works**, he had something to boast about—**but not before God**. 3 What does Scripture say? “**Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.**” 4 Now to the one who works, wages **are not credited** as a gift but as **an obligation**. 5 However, to the one who **does not work but trusts God** who justifies the ungodly, **their faith is credited** as righteousness.

Here observe:

Paul defines biblical faith in and through the life of our Father Abraham. Paul says in verse 1 that Abraham made a discovery in the matter of faith. Then, in verse 2, Abraham discovered he could not work to get God’s approval. In verse 3, Paul quotes Genesis 15:6: “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” In verse 4, Paul clarifies Abraham’s understanding

that he could not work and be credited with righteousness; a gift is not an obligation. In verse 5, Paul states that Abraham's trust in God was why he was credited with righteousness.

Now comes the point of contention: was Abrahamic trust (faith) a confession of belief in God, or was Abrahamic faith absolute and total obedience to God based on trust?

This question can only be answered by examining Abraham's life of faith! Fortunately, the Holy Spirit captured Abraham's life of faith for us in the book of **Genesis (12:1-26:4-5)**.

Before we explore Abraham's faith, we must understand the context from which Paul has framed his argument with Abraham. In Romans chapter three, Paul emphatically stated that only faith can justify a person.

Here observe:

- 1) **Rom 3:20:** *"For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his (God's) sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin." (ESV)*
- 2) **Rom 3:28:** *"For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law." (ESV)*

Paul's argument in Romans is emphatic: Jews and Gentiles are only saved by faith. **Rom 3:29-30** says, *"Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one- who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith." (ESV)*

I would get no argument from the proponents of gnostic faith based on these scriptures; they would say amen, yes, we are saved by faith. The problem is they are preaching a false faith, a gnostic faith that eliminates works of faith.

The gnostic faith heresy is so pervasive that right now, many of you are thinking I am a heretic; I used the word works and implied that works are a part of faith. Let's see if I am the heretic or if the heretics have you believing a lie. Let me quote a very famous preacher."

He said- Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone

The famous preacher is James, the brother of Jesus, and these words are in sacred scripture (**James 2:21-23**).

I will quote another famous preacher who said, *"Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among the nations."*

This famous preacher is the Apostle Paul; these words are in sacred scripture. (**Romans 1:5**).

Let me state this emphatically: There is no contradiction between Paul and James; they both state that genuine faith obeys God.

Biblical faith listens to, believes in, and obeys God, resulting in a declaration of righteousness. This is the faith of Abraham; he trusted God and was credited with righteousness.

This I Intend to Prove from the Scriptures

Abrahams Faith Timeline

The life of Abraham will prove that Abraham listened to, believed in, and obeyed God. Seven significant scriptures below reveal why Abraham was declared righteous by his faith (trust).

- 1) Abram's call (Gen 12:1-3) was in **1885 BC**. Abram was **75** (Gen 12:4)
- 2) Abram worshipped God (Gen 12:7-9) in **1885 BC** when he was **75**.
- 3) Abrams's promise of a son, descendants and being declared righteous by his faith (Gen 15:1-6) was in **1876 BC**. Abram is **84**.
- 4) Abraham's life of obedience (**1885 BC to 1845 BC**) from **75** to **115** years old.
- 5) Abram was given the circumcision covenant, Ishmael was 13 years old, and Abram's name was changed to Abraham (Gen 17:7-14). Abraham is **99**. The year is **1861 BC**.
- 6) Isaac, the son of Promise, was born in 1860 BC (Gen 21:5). Abraham is **100** years old.
- 7) Abraham passes the test; he will sacrifice Isaac, and God stops him and provides the animal for the sacrifice. God says -I know you fear me; you have not withheld from me your only son. (Gen 22:12) Abraham is **115**. The year is **1845**.

Below are some other significant events that will not play a significant role in the apologetic but you should be aware of:

- (1880 to 1875 B.C.) Abram's war victory and Melchizedek's blessing (Gen 14:13-24)
- (1876 B.C.) Through a sacrifice, God made a covenant with Abraham for descendants in the land (Gen 15:7-16). Abram was **84**.
- (1874 B.C.) Abram, Hagar and the birth of Ismael- (Gen 16:16) Abram is **86**.

Here Observe:

Abraham's life reveals a lifetime of faithfulness to the LORD.

- From the time of Abram's call in (1885 BC, Gen 12:1-3) to when he was told that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the heavens in (15:1-6), **9 years** have passed.
- Abram's name was changed to Abraham, and he received the Covenant of Circumcision **14 years** after his call (Gen 17:7-14)
- Isaac, the child of promise, was born **25 years** after Abram's call- (Gen 21:5)

- Abraham's test to sacrifice Isaac is **40 years** after the call (Gen 22:12)

Abraham kept the faith for 40 years and was asked to sacrifice his son in the 40th year of his call. Abraham's lifetime of obedience proved he trusted God and had faith.

Now that we have established the timeline of faith, a more detailed look at the seven significant events identified in Abraham's Faith Timeline will be dealt with.

1) **Gen 12:1-4 Abram's Call (1885 BC) at 75**

The LORD had said to Abram, "**Leave your native country**, your relatives, and your father's family, and **go to the land that I will show you**. 2 I will make you into **a great nation**. I will **bless you and make you famous**, and you will be a **blessing to others**. 3**I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt**. All the **families on earth** will be **blessed through you**." 4So Abram departed **as the LORD had instructed**, and Lot went with him. Abram was **seventy-five years old when he left Haran**. (NLT)

From the text above, we see the call has three divisions.

Division 1- The Directive or Call

- 1) The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you."

Division 2- The Promises

- 1) I will make you a great nation.
- 2) I will bless you and make you famous.
- 3) You will be a blessing to others.
- 4) I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt.
- 5) All the families of the earth will be blessed through you.

Division 3- The Obedience of Faith

- 1) So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.

Abraham's call and promises could never have occurred if he did not do as God instructed. Obedience was essential. Abraham was required to leave his home and his family if he was to receive the promises. This was no minor act of obedience.

Let me put this in perspective. God says to you, sell everything, leave your family, and move to a foreign land next week; he will show you where you will live and what to do when you get there.

A few questions:

- 1) Are you ready to leave everything you own and your family?
- 2) Are you prepared to venture to another country without details?
- 3) Do you trust God to lead and provide for you, and are you willing to go right now?

When Paul said that Abraham believed in God and was credited with righteousness nine years after his call, it was not a simple one-time confession; it cost Abraham everything: his homeland, his life, his family, and his current livelihood. Abraham's faith required absolute trust and obedience for the rest of his life. This will be proven as we continue to study Abraham's life. Note it took 9 years after the call to receive the declaration of righteousness.

(Gen 12:1-3) reveals that Abraham's faith began with a call, a specific directive, that included five promises resulting in his absolute trust and complete obedience.

Faith is the same today; the call to the church is to follow Christ with absolute trust and obedience. Here are a few scriptures that connect the Christian walk to Abraham's life.

Jesus said in **Luke 14:25-27**- *A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, 26 "If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple." 27 And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.* (NLT)

Jesus said in **Mark 8: 34-36** *Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me." 35 If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. 36 And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? 37 Is anything worth more than your soul* (NLT)

Here, observe that the cost of following Christ is similar to Abraham's call. Abraham's call cost him everything, and to follow Christ is the same. We must put Christ above our family and our way of life. We must walk the same path that Jesus and Abraham walked -absolute and total trust expressed through obedience.

You cannot be my disciple is very compelling and emphatic language. This call to faith differs considerably from what is preached in much of the modern church. The gnostic faith teachers tell you, a one-time confession of Christ, and you are in.

This is precisely the opposite of Abraham's life, which will be proven as the argument continues.

Moving beyond the call, the blessing, and forty years of obedience, faith also includes worship.

2) Gen 12:7-9 Abram Worships God (1885 B.C.) at 75

*7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants." And **Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the LORD**, who had appeared to him. 8 After that, Abram travelled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There **he built another altar and dedicated it to the LORD**, and **he worshiped the LORD**. 9 Then Abram continued travelling south by stages toward the Negev. (NLT)*

Attention must be given to the fact that Abraham built two altars so he could worship the Lord. Immediately from this text, several questions come to my mind.

- 1) Why did Abraham think it was necessary to build an altar?
- 2) What was the purpose of the altar?
- 3) What does it mean he worshiped the LORD?

From this, we begin to understand the relational dynamics that were going on. We can extrapolate the following:

- 1) Abraham talked face to face in the call and promises.
- 2) The altar's shape, size and appearance are not provided, but we know it is a sacred place, evidenced by its dedication to the Lord.
- 3) Abraham uses the altar to commune with God. This could include praise, thankfulness, prayers for direction, a call for fellowship, or a request for provisions and sacrifices for sin.

So, to answer the questions above. Abraham built an altar because he wanted a sacred, special place for him and the LORD. We don't know exactly what the altar looked like; we know it was where Abraham expected to communicate with the LORD. We also know that the altar building was stimulated by faith and rooted in the desire to worship.

Other translations like the NIV and ESV translate the word worship as calling on the name of the LORD. What is clear from the text is that Abraham's life was dedicated to communion and fellowship with God. This is true worship.

In the New Testament, Paul provides us with even more profound teachings regarding worship. In **(Rom 12:1-2)** he says *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a **living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship**. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what **God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will**.* (NIV)

Undoubtedly, Abraham's faith was revealed through his worship; he presented himself as a holy living sacrifice wholly pleasing to the Lord.

What is not stated is whether Abraham made an animal sacrifice on the altar for his unintentional sins. This is almost certain. Later in **Gen 15**, we see God requiring animal sacrifice for the covenant he makes with Abraham. Then, in **Gen 22**, we see that God provided an animal for the sacrifice that replaced Abraham's offering of his son. In the sacrificial system within the Mosaic Covenant, the blood of the innocent animal was given as an atonement for unintentional sins. (**Lev 1-6, 16**)

The scripture testimony is my basis for believing that Abraham made a sacrifice as part of his worship.

So far, our texts and chronology reveal that biblical faith includes a call, promises, obedience and worship as a way of life.

Next is the main text (**Gen 15:5-6**), where Paul quotes from (**Rom 4:3**).

3) Gen 15:1-6 Abram's Promise and Declared Righteous (1876 BC) at 84

1Some 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." 2But Abram replied, "O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son? Since you've given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. 3You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir." 4Then the LORD said to him, "No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir." 5Then 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!" 6And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith." (NLT)

From (**Gen 12:1-3**) the call of Abraham to (**Gen 15:5-6**) 9 years have passed, and Abraham is still living by faith. It will be another 16 years before Isaac is born, the promise of his heir stated in (**Gen 15:4**). We know this from (**Gen 21:1-5**) which says Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born.

From the above text, we understand that Abraham remained faithful through the years, resulting in God's ongoing declaration of righteousness. Now, the evidence of an obedient life.

4) Abraham's Life of Obedience (1885-1845)

The following five scriptures reveal what a life of faithful obedience looks like. Please pay special attention to what is highlighted and underlined.

i. Gen 17:1-2 Serve Me Faithfully and Live a Blameless Life

1When Abram was **ninety-nine years old**, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’ **Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life.** 2 I will make a **covenant** with you, by which I will **guarantee to give you countless descendants.**” (NLT)

Abraham was 99 years old when God said, “*Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life.*” This command comes 24 years after his original call at 75. **Do not be deceived.** Abraham’s faith included faithfulness and a walk of holiness. God himself mandated these requirements face-to-face.

Based on this scripture alone, we can prove that Abraham’s faith was not based on a confession of faith or simply believing as articulated in the modern church. Abraham had served God for 24 years and was still being told to be faithful and walk blameless. Up next is God’s expectation of Abraham to teach the ways of the LORD to his family.

ii. Gen 18:18-19 Abraham Will Do What is Right and Just

18“*For Abraham will certainly **become a great and mighty nation**, and **all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him.** 19I have singled him out so that **he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just.** **Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised.**” (NLT)*

I draw your attention to the obedience God expects Abraham to comply with. God says he singled Abraham out so that *he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of LORD by doing what is right and just.* What is clear from the text is that faith keeps the way of the LORD. Notice the closing comment by God himself,” *then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised.*”

Do not be deceived. God expected Abraham to do what was right and just. Our call to faith is the same. Now, the ultimate test of faith.

iii. Gen 22:10-12 Abraham Did Not Withhold His Son Isaac

10And Abraham picked up the knife to **kill his son as a sacrifice.** 11 At that moment, the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” “Yes,” Abraham replied. “Here I am!” 12“Don’t lay a hand on the boy!” the angel said. “Do not hurt him in any way, **for now I know that you truly fear God.** **You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son.**” (NLT)

Here, in chapter 22, God instructs Abraham to Kill his only son, and Abraham is willing to comply with the request. Genesis does not give us a reason for such confidence, but the book of Hebrews does. **Heb 11:17-19** says **By faith Abraham, when God tested him,** *offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.”*

19 Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death. (NIV)

The lesson from this text is that faith will be **tested**, and when the test comes, we must trust and obey God, even if we are asked to sacrifice our son. This is biblical faith, not a one-time confession. Faith involves passing tests.

Here, observe that Abraham is not only expected to be faithful and blameless, and do what is right and just, but he is also required to obey God's direct commands like leave your country and sacrifice your son. Faith is absolute obedience to the voice of God.

This is the teaching of the Bible regarding Biblical faith, the exact opposite of what the modern church teaches. I strongly suggest you trust the testimony of scripture and disregard the heresies of the Gnostic preachers. Next, God swears to fulfill the covenant.

iv. Gen 22:15-18 You Have Obeyed Me

*15 Then the angel of the LORD called again to Abraham from heaven. 16 "This is what the LORD says: **Because you have obeyed me** and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that **17 I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies.** 18 And through your descendants, **all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me.**" (NLT)*

I draw your attention to the phrase "*all because you obeyed me.*" All the blessings to Abraham remain in effect because Abraham continues to obey God. Don't miss this: Abraham's obedience is essential to his faith.

This is precisely what James is talking about in **Jam 2:21-23** when he says, *21 Don't you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown **to be right with God by his actions** when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see, **his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete.** 23 And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: **"Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith."** He was even called the friend of God. 24 So you see, we are **shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.** (NLT)*

Based on our modern understanding of faith, perhaps faith alone would be better translated as belief alone. I say this because Abraham acted on what he believed. This is precisely how biblical faith is articulated in the scriptures. The word translated faith is *Pistis*, and in the Greek, Strong's 4102, it can also be translated as (assurance, belief, believe, and fidelity)

The 40 years of Abraham's life align perfectly with belief and actions as expressed in (**James 2:21-23**). The modern-day gnostic faith, for the most part, excludes obedience from faith and relies entirely on confession alone. Or they say if you were truly saved, you would be obedient,

which is nothing more than gnostic rhetoric since the vast majority of people who have gnostic faith do not walk in the ways of Abraham.

Remember, Abraham believed in God, which was credited to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6, Rom 4:3, Gal 3:6). It should be clear beyond any reasonable doubt that Abraham's belief and actions were in perfect alignment. Biblical faith listens to, believes in, and obeys God.

Do not be deceived by false prophets who tell you that confession is biblical faith. Faith requires an alignment between what you believe and what you do.

What did Jesus say about gnostic faith, aka confession only?

In Matt 7:21-23, Jesus says, "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one **who does the will of my Father** who is in heaven. 22 On that day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; **depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.**'* (NIV)

Here, observe that Jesus himself tells us no one will enter the kingdom of heaven unless they conform to the will of God. He also says no one who follows the way of lawlessness can enter; they will be banished. Jesus makes it clear that calling him Lord (confession) means nothing; doing the will of the Father is required.

In the New Covenant, we are told to become a disciple of Christ. We convert to Christianity by repenting of our sins, being baptized (**Matt 28:18-20**), dying to our old way of life (**Rom 6:1-13**), and having all previous sins abolished. This process leads to the infilling of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38**). The law of God is then written on our hearts (**Heb 8:1-13**), and we are born again (**John 3:16-18**). We follow Christ's way of life, turning away from sin and submitting 100% to the Father. If we sin, we go to our Great High Priest and confess our sins to stay in the right relationship (**Heb 4:14-16, I John 1:7-9**).

All of the above are works of faith (not works of the law or works of self-righteousness). We believe and do what we are told. Our actions follow what we say we believe. This is Biblical faith; it is not a one-time confession asking Jesus to save us from our sins.

More details regarding Abraham's work of faith follow in the next verse.

v. Gen 26:4-5 Abraham Obeyed God His Entire Life

*4I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars of the sky, and I will give them all these lands. And through your descendants **all the nations of the earth will be blessed.** 5I will do this because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, **commands, decrees, and instructions.**" (NLT)*

Here Observe:

Abraham listened and obeyed all my requirements, commands, decrees and instructions.

The text reveals the first thing Abraham did was listen, and because he had ears to hear, God could present to him all his requirements, commands, decrees and instructions. Abraham obeyed every possible spectrum of obedience.

Biblical faith starts with a willingness to listen. Jesus said in **Matt 11:15**- *“He that hath ears to hear let him hear.”* (KJV)

Beyond all doubt, biblical faith is about hearing, trusting and obeying God. It is not about works of the law, it is not about self-righteousness, it is all about works of faith.

This is what is fundamentally missed by the gnostic proponents of faith. They fail to see this third option. The works of faith are precisely what Paul and James mean when they say Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.

Faith has never changed regardless of the covenant; it listens to, believes in, and obeys God. Now, the covenant God made with Abraham.

5) Gen 17:1-14 Circumcision Covenant & Name Change (1861 BC) at 99

I When Abram was **ninety-nine years old**, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai— ‘God Almighty.’ **Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life.** 2 I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.” 3 At this, **Abram fell face down on the ground.** Then God said to him, 4 “This is my covenant with you: **I will make you the father of a multitude of nations!** 5 What’s more, **I am changing your name.** It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called **Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations.** 6 I will make you extremely **fruitful.** Your descendants will become **many nations**, and **kings** will be among them! 7 “I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, **from generation to generation.** This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 And I will **give the entire land of Canaan,** where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God.” (NLT)

I previously addressed under Abram’s life of obedience that God called him to be faithful and blameless, and based on his conduct, the blessing would come forth.

Now, remember that Abram had been faithful for **24 years** before God changed his name and put forward the covenant of circumcision. His descendants will possess the entire land of Canaan, and God will be the God of Abraham’s descendants. The following verses define the covenant.

9 Then God said to Abraham, “**Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant.** You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility. 10 This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: **Each male among you must be circumcised.** 11 You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you. 12 From generation to generation, every male child must be **circumcised on the eighth day** after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the **servants** born in your household and the **foreign-born servants** whom you have purchased. 13 All must be circumcised. Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting covenant. 14 Any male who fails to be circumcised will be **cut off from the covenant family for breaking the covenant.**” (NLT)

Here, observe that God’s covenant with Abraham’s descendants has one primary responsibility in this stage of the ongoing promise. His descendant must adhere to circumcision. Failure to comply with this responsibility means separation from the covenant family.

Do not think that circumcision is the only term of the covenant. It is the primary connection to the family covenant. Do not forget such words previously spoken in **Gen 18:19**: I have singled him out so that he will **direct his sons and their families** to **keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just.**

The covenant of circumcision means the God of Abraham is the God of his descendants. This means they are to walk in the ways of Abraham’s God, just like Abraham did. It is evident in (**Gen 18:18-19**) that Abraham would teach his family God’s way of doing what is right and just.

Do not be deceived; the people of God are to walk in the ways of Abraham. Now, the promise.

6) Gen 21:5 Isaac the son of Promise (1860 BC) at 100

In Genesis 21, God keeps his promise to Sarah; she conceives Isaac, and then Abraham keeps the covenant by circumcising Isaac on the eighth day. This text reveals that God kept his promises, and Abraham kept the covenant.

This text is significant because Abraham is 100 years old (**Gen 21:5**). Twenty-five years have passed since he received his call, and Abraham is still faithful.

I believe the words of the apostle Paul are appropriate here. He said in **2 Tim 4:7-8** **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful.** 8 And now the prize awaits me—**the crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will **give me** on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all **who eagerly look forward to his appearing.** (NLT)

Paul, like Abraham, remained faithful; they will both receive the crown of righteousness when Christ returns. You see, Abraham and Paul were declared righteous by their faithfulness. The same is true for Christians; the righteous shall live by faith, as the following scriptures reveal.

Rom 1:17 & Gal 3:11- As the Scripture says, *It is through faith that a righteous person has life*. (NLT)

Heb 10:38a And my righteous ones will **live by faith**. (NLT)

Hab 2:4b *But the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God* (NLT)

Here, observe that these verses are consistent with the life of Abraham. When the Bible says the righteous will live by faith, it is not a one-time expression of faith but a lifetime of faithfulness.

Do not be deceived; faith must be expressed throughout your whole life. Abraham remained faithful, and so did Paul. A crown awaits them; if you and I remain faithful, we will also receive one.

I emphasize again that I do not want anyone misrepresenting what I am saying. I am saying you cannot by works of the law, performing good deeds, or by self-righteousness, be declared righteous by God. God will declare us righteous if we remain faithful to him. You must listen, believe and obey him. Works of faith are expressed in listening, believing and obeying. What we say, believe, and do must line up (**Jam 2:21-23**).

Now, the ultimate test of biblical faith.

7) Gen 22:12 Abraham Passes the Test (1845 BC) at 115

In Gen 22, God tests Abraham's faith 40 years after his call (**Gen 12:1-3**). Abraham is instructed to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah as a burnt offering. Abraham is ready to put the knife on his son, and the Angel of the Lord stops him. Then, in (Gen 22:12) it says- 12, "Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for *now I know that you truly fear God*. *You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son.*" (NLT)

What is very clear in this text is that God will test our faith. God was still testing Abraham's faith 40 years after he received his call, so there is no reason to believe that God will not test our faith.

■ **Do not be deceived; faithful obedience to God through Christ is the call to the church.**

I believe a short faith summary is in order:

Faith Summary

- 1) Faith has a call, promises and a requirement to obey.
- 2) Faith includes worship manifesting as praise, prayer, fellowship, reverence and personal sacrifice to present oneself to God as holy and pleasing.
- 3) Faith calls us to serve God faithfully and live blamelessly before him.
- 4) Faith requires us to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just.
- 5) Faith requires us to listen to, believe in, and obey God.

- 6) Faith includes every spectrum of obedience, including requirements, commands, decrees and instructions.
- 7) Faith requires us to obey the terms of the covenant.
- 8) Faith requires us to live faithful to the end.
- 9) Faith says the righteous shall live every day by their faithfulness.
- 10) Faith will be tested to prove its validity.

This is the teaching of the Bible regarding faith!

Now that we understand faith, we can read **Rom 4:1-5** and understand why Paul used Abraham as our model of faith. **Do not be deceived**; the points above are all from the life of Abraham and reveal what Biblical faith is. God is asking you and me to listen, believe and obey Him. **Do not be deceived** into believing you have Biblical faith if you do not listen to, believe in, and obey God.

Additional scriptures from Romans 4 below will add to our understanding of Biblical faith.

Other Significant Teachings in Romans 4

Rom 4:13-15 says that God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God's law **but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith**. *14 If God's promise is only for those who obey the law, then faith is not necessary, and the promise is pointless. 15 For the law, it **always brings punishment** on those who try to obey it.* (NLT)

Here, faith is based on wanting the right relationship with God. Faith does not say I will obey the law and God will accept me. It is the opposite; it says I want to have a good relationship with God, so I seek to please him. This is evidenced in **Heb 11:6**, which says *And without faith, it is impossible to please him, for whoever would **draw near** to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who **seek him**.* (ESV)

Drawing near and seeking are relationship words; they are faith words. Another critical aspect of faith is hope. **Heb 11:1** says *Now faith is the assurance of things **hoped for**, the conviction of things not seen.* (ESV)

This brings me to the second key set of verses in Romans 4.

Rom 4:18-22 said 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!” *19 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.*

*20 Abraham never wavered in **believing God’s promise**. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. 21 He was fully convinced that God was able to do whatever he promised. 22 And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous.* (NLT)

It is imperative to understand that Biblical faith is rooted in hope. Hope is the central motivator for faith. God gave Abraham this hope through 5 specific promises repeated below from (**Gen 12:1-3**).

- 1) I will make you a great nation.
- 2) I will bless you and make you famous.
- 3) You will be a blessing to others.
- 4) I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt.
- 5) All the families of the earth will be blessed through you.

All of these promises can only be accomplished by God. Abraham's hope in God's ability to carry out these promises is the source of Abraham's faith.

The promise is the motivator. Our motivation to follow God is also rooted in the hope of eternal life. Paul makes this clear for us in our following Roman 4 passage.

Rom 4:23-25 says, And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was recorded for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God. (NLT)

We, like Abraham, have a promise set before us that God will count us as righteous if we believe in him.

Romans reveals that faith is rooted in hope and expressed in trust. Abraham lived a life of faithfulness; he discovered that God would credit him with righteousness because he sought a relationship with God based on listening, believing and obeying.

Do you have Biblical or Gnostic faith?

Are you trusting in a one-time confession of Christ, believing you are externally secure because of this one-time confession in Christ? If yes, you have a gnostic faith.

Are you seeking to draw near to God? Are you seeking to please God? Are you listening to, believing in, and obeying God? If yes, you have biblical faith.

Jesus gave us an unmistakable picture of Biblical faith in the gospels. He said in Matthew:

Matt 4:4- It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. In **4:7**, he said, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the Test. In **4:10**, he said, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.

Jesus reveals that the overarching connection to all the aspects of faith is doing the will of God.

In other words, are you listening to, believing in, and obeying God? This is Biblical faith.

Do not be deceived, Biblical faith is not just a confession of faith, it is a living faith. A faith based on hope believes that if we do the will of God, we will receive eternal life and every promise of God in Christ Jesus. This is beautifully stated in Hebrews 10.

Heb 10:36 says *So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! 36 Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised.* (NLT)

The author of Hebrews tells us to keep our confidence in the Lord because with this confidence is the hope of a great reward. The theology says you must have patient endurance and continue to do God's will to receive the promise.

Do not be deceived, Biblical faith does the will of God by listening, believing and obeying him.

Conclusion

I state once more that Biblical faith is not the works of the law; it is not the work of self-righteousness. Biblical faith is based on works of faith evidenced by doing the will of God. Here is the will of God for us:

- Biblical faith listens, believes and obeys God like Abraham and Paul
- Biblical faith hears the call to become a disciple of Christ
- Biblical faith enters into baptisms for the forgiveness of sins
- Biblical faith receives the Holy Spirit upon conversion
- Biblical faith walks in the power of the Holy Spirit, living in victory over sin
- Biblical faith seeks a deep relationship with God
- Biblical faith says how can I please the Lord
- Biblical faith lives by every word of God
- Biblical faith worships and serves God only
- Biblical faith does not test God
- Biblical faith relies on Christ to cleanse us when we confess our sin
- Biblical faith is motivated by the promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus
- Biblical faith abides in Christ

Biblical faith does the will of God.

If the above reflects your life, you have an Abrahamic faith and will be credited with righteousness because of your faith.

Obtaining Biblical Faith

If you don't have Abrahamic faith and would like to enter into God's rewards and promises of eternal life, it is not too late. Here are the steps you must take:

Step 1- Admit you have not walked in the ways of Abraham; you have walked in your own ways. You must agree to make this change by agreeing to walk in the ways of the Lord. This is called repentance. You must say I will listen, believe and obey God. God is directing you to follow Christ Jesus if you are willing to do this.

Step 2- Obey God and become a disciple of Christ by following his path for your life. God sent him to show us the way to life. You must confess your sins and ask God through Christ to forgive you. Then, you must be baptized. In baptism, you say I am turning away from sin and will live the rest of my life for Christ.

These two steps come with a promise. God will empower you with the Holy Spirit to help you live victorious.

Step 3- If you sin after conversion, immediately confess your sin to God and ask him to forgive you. You are responsible for resisting sin and confessing any known sin to stay in the right relationship with God.

Step 4- Join a Bible-believing church and live the rest of your life learning and growing in the ways of Christ.

Step 5 – Live the life of Abraham, listen, believe and obey God all the days of your life.

Your local church and leadership will direct you beyond this.

Now, a final word for believers.

Final Word

Never quit, no matter how hard things get; remember God is for you; he is personally invested in your victory. If you stumble or fall, don't stay down; get back up, trust and believe him.

We are called to live above sin as **1 Jn 2:1** says *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* (ESV)

Notice from the text that sin is an exception, a slip-up or a fall. Then, the text goes on to say that we have an advocate. Jesus is our advocate, one who intercedes to God on our behalf. Jesus, as an advocate, is operating as our great high priest. **Heb 4:14-16** says “*Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”.* (ESV)

We are specifically instructed to draw near to God in our time of need, if we need mercy or grace the throne is the only place where it is given out.

Our call to faith is the same call given to Abraham. We must set our hearts on obeying God's requirements, commands, decrees, and instructions, but if we fail, we go to the throne of grace and mercy.

This is Biblical faith; it is a lifetime of staying in a relationship with God by hearing, believing and obeying. This includes believing in God's provision to cleanse us from our sins.

Keep the faith, endure to the end and receive the promise.

Thank you for taking the time to read this article.

Please share this truth with everyone.

Bibliography

ESV- English Standard Version -Bible Hub Software www.biblehub.com