

Faith In Action

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[0 : 0 0] Chapter 24, verses 1 to 28, and that's on page 23 of the Red Bible. So, Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the Lord had blessed him in every way.

He said to the chief servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, put your hand under my thigh. I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.

The servant asked him, what if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from? Make sure that you do not take my son back there, Abraham said.

The Lord, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father's household and my native land, and who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, to your offspring I will give this land. He will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there. If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine.

[1 : 1 0] Only do not take my son back there. So the servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter. Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and left, taking with him all kinds of good things from his master.

He sent out for Aram Naharim and made his way to the town of Nahor. He made the camels kneel down near the well outside the town. It was well towards evening, the time for women to go out and draw water.

Then he prayed, O Lord, God of my master Abraham, give me success today and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside the spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water.

May it be that when I say to a girl, please let down your jar that I may have a drink, and she says, drink, and I'll wash your camels too. Let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master. Before he had finished praying, Rebecca came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel, son of Milcah, and was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor.

[2 : 1 8] The girl who was very beautiful, a virgin, no man had ever lain with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar, and came up again. The servant hurried to meet her and said, please give me a little water from your jar.

Drink, my lord, she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink. After she had given him a drink, she said, I'll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking. So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels. Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the lord had made his journey successful.

When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring weighing a beka, and two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels. Then he asked, whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?

She answered him, I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son that Milcah bore to Nahor. And she added, we have plenty of straw and fodder, as well as room for you to spend the night.

[3 : 2 2] Then the man bowed down and worshipped the lord, saying, Praise be to the lord, the god of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master.

As for me, the lord has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives. The girl ran and told her mother's household about these things. Thank you, Kate.

Just ask Michael now to come up and bring God's word to us. Thank you, Michael. It's nice to be back with you once again in Cargilline.

Always enjoy coming over and sharing the word with you. And as we've heard, we want to look this morning at Faith in Action, as it's seen in the lives of the characters that are mentioned in the story that we've read together.

It's a tremendous story. It begins with Abraham, and it goes on through his servant, and on to Rebecca, who would become the wife of Isaac.

[4 : 32] Abraham is a man of faith, and his faith continues right to the end of his days. In the next chapter, we read about his death.

But right up until that time, he continued to live by faith, and it's no mistake that the writer to the Hebrews refers to this faith. I was surprised when I looked at Hebrews 11 again that nearly a quarter of that chapter, that catalogue, that photo of men and women of faith, that a quarter of that chapter is taken up with the life of Abraham and how he lived for the Lord.

So here is this man, Abraham. He's getting on in years. He's nearing the end of his life, but he wants a wife for his son Isaac, the son of promise.

And he sends his servant, Eliezer, to go out and to find a wife for his son. And this story, although written in the Old Testament, is so demonstrative of what faith really is.

We see faith in action right the way through. We have the story of how Rebecca does indeed come back with the servant and become Isaac's wife.

[6 : 03] Paul, when he's writing to Timothy, reminds us in his second epistle, chapter 3 and verse 16, that all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

And certainly this story, which is part of Scripture, does indeed train us in righteousness. It does show us the right way in which we ought to go.

It's also, of course, a beautiful love story, isn't it? It's fascinating to read these customs of days gone by. I think it's far better than a Mills and Boone faith in action in this beautiful love story.

So let's look at these three characters and see what they teach us about faith, about trust in the Lord. So the first one we look at is Abraham, and we see his faith in God.

When old age comes, of course there is a temptation, isn't there, to sit back. Most of you would not know about that being young, but the temptation is to take things easy, to let life go on by.

[7 : 23] But that didn't happen as far as Abraham was concerned. The years had taken their toll. He was full of years. He was getting on.

He didn't have the energy that he once had. But he did remember the promises that God had made to him. The promise that God was going to send a seed, and that seed had come in the form of Isaac.

And God had said to him that through his seed all the earth would be blessed. And this had, by definition, had to have a son to be born to his son Isaac.

He needed a wife. And so we have Abraham looking down through the years, seeing what's going to happen in the future, and knowing that the purposes of God will be fulfilled, but they will be fulfilled in a wife for Isaac and for other children being born.

Put your hand, he says, to his servant, verse 2, under my thigh. I want you to swear by the Lord God of heaven, the God of earth.

[8 : 46] Something very important is about to take place. Go and find a wife for my son Isaac. The plan to us may seem very strange.

An arranged marriage. But this arranged marriage had its authority in heaven itself. And it did meet the approval of God himself.

And we will see the hand of God through all the events. But how do we see Abraham's faith? Well, we see it in that he's obedient to God's revealed will.

Abraham's faith in what God had made known. That God would bring to pass what he had promised. Remember that Abraham is living in a land that isn't his.

He's surrounded by unbelievers who worship a multiplicity of God's. But he couldn't allow his son to marry any of these women.

[9 : 55] He was a man of faith. And he knew that it would be wrong for a believer to be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. So he says, verse 3, You will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I am living.

He sends him out to find one who worshipped the true God. The God who had made the world. The God who lived. The God who was active.

Abraham knew what was required of him. He knew that through the seed of his son, the nations of the world would be blessed. So he sends his servant back to his relatives that a wife might be found for Isaac.

Abraham's faith, if you like, is seen in his works. His one desire is to be pleasing to God. And how could he be pleasing to God if he was disobedient to the revealed will of God?

And, accordingly, there's an application for each one of us here this morning. Age, ill health, prevents us from doing what we would like to do.

[11 : 15] But we never reach that age in our lives when we stop being obedient to the will of God. We should always be committed to what God has made known to us in his word.

No matter what our age might be. Abraham knew what was required of him. And we know what is required of us if we are Christians this morning.

We have it here in the scriptures. God has made known how we should live our lives. What we should do. The whole revealed will of God is there for us to see.

And if we are committed to God and if God has spoken to us through his word then we must be obedient to that word. We can never retire from this commitment.

We have his commands to obey. And his commands, we're told, are not burdensome. When I was a young child I used to go along to an organization which was called the Bible Club Movement.

[12 : 33] And they had a motto. And it went like this. God said it. I believe it. And that settles it. And that should always be our motto.

God has said it. God told Abraham I'm going to bless through the seed that you are going to bring into the world. And through his seed the nations of the world will be blessed.

And we are blessed because we are children of Abraham by faith. So what took place all those years ago has relevance to us today. as God calls us to live this life of faith.

Of being obedient to what God has made known in his words. That Abraham's faith is also seen. And that he believed and submitted himself to the overruling providence of God.

See what's happening here. Abraham gives his servant his instructions. Verse 4 Go to my country and to my relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.

[13 : 47] He'd left his family almost a hundred years previously. He'd left that land because God brought him into the land of Canaan and God showed him that land and God said to him I'm going to give you this land.

I'm going to bless you. So a hundred years later he sends his servant back in order to find his family to find a woman who would be willing to leave home and family and marry his son.

One who worshipped one true God. It was a big thing to do. But Abraham is committed to the will of the Lord and he's also committed to the overruling providence of God.

What if the woman doesn't come says the servant? What if she's not willing to follow me? It was a legitimate question. Well whatever else happens says Abraham don't take my son back there.

We have left that old life. We're committed to God's will and we're committed to his providence.

Look at verse 7. The Lord, the God of heaven who brought me out of my father's household and my latest land and who spoke to me and promised me on oath saying to your offspring I will give this land.

[15 : 20] He will send his angel before you so that you will get a wife for my son from there. Abraham was too far in his walk with God to lack confidence in God.

God wasn't going to let things go wrong. Is there doubt in Abraham's mind? What does he say in verse 8?

It appears at first reading that there's some doubt in Abraham's mind. If the woman is unwilling to come back with you then you will be released from this oath of mine.

Only do not take my son back there. Now I don't believe this is doubt at all. We've emphasised the fact that he believes in the revealed will of God.

But he's also believing that God is able to providentially overrule in all things even if things don't turn out as expected.

[16 : 25] If things don't turn out as expected if the woman isn't ready to go back then obedience must be the hallmark.

Obedience is required. Isaac is not to return even if things don't turn out as we expect. You see here is a man who was saying in effect that if things go wrong I am there for you. I trust in you the living God. And you are the living God who can be trusted regardless as to the way things turn out.

Abraham wouldn't have known Romans 8 and verse 28 but he surely believed it that all things work together for good to those that love God and to those that are called according to his purpose. Of course we know the end of the story but Abraham at this time remained in ignorance as to how things were going to turn out. But he believes God he trusts God and he recognized that even if things didn't turn out as he expected them to that God still had to be obeyed.

[17 : 53] He still trusted. And surely this is a principle that is vitally important as we face the circumstances of life.

We commit ourselves to a life of obedience to the Lord's will if we are Christians. We take the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour and our Lord and we ask him to direct our paths.

And we need to constantly exercise our faith in him when things don't turn out as we expect them to. Abraham believed God.

Do we believe God? Do we trust him if things are not going as we expect? Are we going on being obedient?

Or do we say, alright, as Abraham might have said, if the woman won't go, then I'll send Isaac back. But that couldn't happen because he knew God's will for his life.

[19 : 03] And we know God's will for our lives. We're called to be obedient to this word. So even when things go wrong, even when things are difficult, we are to trust him.

Faith in action. But that faith of Abraham is also seen in the servant. The servant was one who evidently knew God for himself.

That God could be trusted. So we look at the servant's faith in God. This man who was sent out to find a wife for Isaac.

Isaac from whom would come blessing for the whole world, I remind you. We've never been given a responsibility like that. But we are given responsibilities to live for the Lord.

And how can we live for the Lord? Well, we can live for the Lord as a servant did. Notice his faith as it is seen in his praying.

[20 : 12] How he is totally dependent upon God. Look at verses 12 to 14. He's travelled out through the desert. He's come to the well.

And we read, Then he prayed, O Lord God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham.

See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, please let down your jar that I may have a drink, and she says, drink, and I'll water your camels too.

Let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.

He's seeking God for himself. It's not a second-hand faith, for we find him in verse 26 and verse 52, as we will refer to again in a moment, bowing down and worshipping the Lord.

[21 : 18] He knew this God. He went out on his journey knowing that there were difficulties to overcome.

He doesn't know where Abraham's family are. He knows the danger of going ahead of God. Will God direct him?

And so he seeks God in prayer, because the girl of God's choice must be found. It must not be his choice.

So he leaves it in the hands of God. He's asking God to direct his steps. He's asking God to clearly show him the girl who will be the wife of Isaac.

And as he prays, he expects. Of course, this man had seen the good hand of God upon his master Abraham.

[22 : 19] And his prayer is that God would continue to be gracious. O Lord God of my master Abraham, give me success today and show kindness to my master Abraham.

And a girl comes to the well. Is this the girl that God has chosen? we have here an example don't we of believing prayer and the importance of prayer in the life of faith.

I remember when we had our children a long time ago but when we had our children Rosemary, my wife, knew that there was a fair chance, and I use a chance in inverted commas, that those who they would marry were also being born at that particular time.

And so she began to pray when the children were very small that they would be led to the right partners, that they would be led to the right people that would become their wives, their husband. And how God has graciously overruled in our lives, and I thank God for a praying wife. The Lord granted her her request, and as I joined with her also in prayer.

[23 : 56] James Montgomery, a hymn writer, wrote this, Prayer is the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try, but prayer is the sublimest strains that reach the majesty on high.

Prayer is saying, Lord, you work out your sovereign purposes. And we have this man waiting upon God, seeking God in prayer.

And then waiting upon God, for we read in verse 21, Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the Lord had made his journey successful.

Prayer. Are we a praying people? Have we this kind of attitude as we seek the Lord's will for our lives?

Are we seeking him daily in prayer? Of course, there's a greater example of a praying life in the Lord Jesus, who was also the servant.

[25 : 16] Remember how he comes into the world. And we know that he is going to bring blessing through the world, through his death, and through his resurrection.

We know that he was the seed of Abraham. And as he comes to the cross, how does he pray? Lord, not my will, but yours be done.

He submits himself to the sovereign will of God, and waits patiently upon God, and triumphs through his death and resurrection.

The servant's faith in God ought to be our faith as well. And as we learn from the servant, so we must learn from that greater servant, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But the servant's faith is also seen in his earnestness. Now, I don't know whether you will find the word earnestness in the dictionary. If you like, put it zeal.

[26 : 35] But you know what I mean. There was a practice, of course, in the East to show hospitality. And we find eventually the servant is taken to Rebecca's home.

We didn't have time to read the whole story this morning, but I do recommend that you read it through, because it is a beautiful story, right from the whole of the chapter.

But food is set before this servant. Verse 33. Then food was set before him, but he said, I will not eat until I have told you what I have to say.

Now let's remember that here's a man who's been traveling in the desert. He's been under the hot sun, desert sun. He's been sleeping under the stars at night.

And there's a feast spread out before him. And we would expect him, and even excuse him, if he sat down and enjoyed his meal.

[27 : 42] But here is a man who is on his Lord's business. Here is a man who is on God's business. He knows that his father, his master's son needs a wife, that God's promise might be fulfilled.

And we find him earnestly pursuing that business, and he doesn't really rest until Rebecca is on the way home. Rebecca's relations want her to stay for a while.

But he says, verse 56, Do not detain me now that the Lord has granted success to my journey. His faith was such that he was ready even to put the legitimate to one side in order that the purposes of God might be worked out.

Do we have a faith like that? There's so many things that are legitimate and okay. But faith is ready to put aside the legitimate in order to serve God.

Is not our life more than food? Said the Lord Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Did not the Lord Jesus put this into practice when he says that the well my meat is to do the will of him who sent me?

[29 : 20] Are we not reminded again in the Sermon on the Mount that we should seek first his kingdom and his righteousness?

What is our priority? How earnest are we in the Lord's business? There's a temptation as we've already said to give up.

But we're called to endure to the end. And we're called to be zealous. We're called to be earnest in our walk with the Lord as this man was.

And we capture something of the urgency, this longing to do what God required of him. But the servant's faith in God is not only seen in his praying, in his earnestness, but also in his worship. I think here is a man who worships in spirit and in truth. Rebecca comes and she draws water for him and his camels.

[30 : 33] And he discovers that she comes from the right family. That God has indeed directed his footsteps. That God has brought him to this particular place.

But what does he do? Does he give himself a pat on the back and say, I've made it? I've done it? No, he worships.

He gives all glory to God and faith does that. Verse 26, Then the man bowed down and worshipped the Lord.

Praise be to the Lord. He gives glory to God and true faith always does that. We find it again in verse 48.

Then he bowed down and worshipped the Lord. I praise the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master's brother for his son.

[31 : 38] True faith gives glory to God. The man takes no credit to himself. The servant was all that he ought to be.

We live, don't we, in a very man-centered world. And that man-centered world can enter into the church where our worship becomes man-centered.

It's all about us. But no, the Lord blesses us in so many different ways as he blessed this servant.

But as he gave glory to God, so we must give glory to have. All that we have, all that we are, all that we are able to accomplish, all that we're unable to do is of him.

And to him must be all the glory. How dare we take the glory to ourselves? The faith of the servant.

[32 : 48] But finally, let's look at Rebecca's faith in God. How do we see that manifested in the pages of Scripture?

Well, we see it, first of all, in her purity. Verse 16. The girl was very beautiful, a virgin.

No man had ever laid with her. Her beauty was more than skin deep. There was a purity. There'd be no sexual laxity.

She was all that a young woman ought to be. And it demonstrated, I would suggest to you, her faith in God. Do we have that kind of faith?

How pure are our lives? young men, young women who are here this morning. You're living in a world where you're being pressurized into a mold to live your lives in this particular way as the world lives.

[34 : 05] But oh, when the time comes for your marriage, may it be able to be said of you that you are pure. that there's been no sexual laxity.

A faith in God will show itself in the life that is lived in a world which is promiscuous. But Rebecca's faith in God is also seen in her works.

Look at verse 17 to 20. We believe that a man is justified by faith alone in Christ alone for salvation. It is faith plus nothing that saves us.

But faith without works is dead. Works shows our faith. And faith is put to test by the servant.

Give me something to drink. drink. And she runs and gets water for him and offers to get water for the camels as well.

[35 : 18] The story tells us that there were 10 camels. And I looked up some few facts and figures. Do you know a camel can drink 25 gallons of water?

So she's not offering him a glass of orange, is she? She's going beyond the call of service. This was commitment.

And she's not doing it for reward. Yes, there was a reward of bracelets, etc. But she didn't know that at the time. She is showing true hospitality, true love.

she doesn't know the reason for it at this time. Yet she walks in obedience to the Lord.

Not only in purity, but she goes the extra mile. And faith is ready to go the extra mile. It's ready to do more than what is asked.

[36 : 29] Give me a drink of water. water. Yes, and I'll give the camels as well. But finally, Rebecca's faith is seen not only in her purity and in her good works, but in her submission to the will of God.

If you read the story carefully, you will see that she sees the hand of God in all that has happened, in all that has taken place. So when she is asked in verse 58, will you go with this man, this servant, she says, I will go.

She recognises that this is the will of God, and off she goes to Canaan to become Isaac's wife. love. And a fitting postscript is provided for us in verse 67.

Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebecca. So she became his wife, and he loved her, and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Rebecca's faith, her commitment to her God, is seen in all of her actions. And our commitment, our faith, will be seen in ours also.

[38 : 04] I think of another man, a heavenly bridegroom. Will you go with this bridegroom?

It's something, a question we all have to ask ourselves. Will you go with this, our heavenly bridegroom? Will you go with him? Will you become his bride?

Will you know that over you is banner is love? Will you go with him in the life of faith? And it's a challenge for each one of us today, from the youngest to the oldest.

Will we walk the path of faith? Will we walk according to his revealed will? Will we walk that life of faith, recognising his overruling providence in our life?

Will we walk the life of faith in prayer? Will we have that faith that earnestly desires God's will to be carried out above everything else?

[39 : 14] Will we have that faith that gives God the glory and causes us to bow in worship? Will we have that faith that will show itself in purity of life?

Will we have that faith that shows itself in good works? will we have that faith that says I will go with this man, the Lord Jesus Christ, to the end of my days.

I will trust him. May the Lord give us that kind of faith that his name might be glorified. Amen.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for the continual challenge of your word and we pray that the word that has been spoken this morning and read will indeed enter into not only our minds but also into our hearts.

We pray that the evil one will not snatch away the seed but rather it will bear fruit. And if oh Lord we have been tempted in the past week or will be tempted in the week that lies ahead or the month that lie ahead grant that we will remember what we have heard today and continue to walk by faith and not by sight.

[40 : 50] Help us to this end we pray in Jesus name. Amen.