



Living by Promise

Genesis 23:19-20

Learning from Abraham's faith

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Two great tests of Abraham's faith

- God tested Abraham regarding the promise of descendants (Genesis 15 and 22).
- God tested Abraham regarding the promise of land (Genesis 23).

"After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah facing Mamre... So the field and the cave that is in it were deeded over to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth." (Genesis 23:19-20)

Living by faith

- Strong Christians must live by faith.
- Faith is part of the believer's spiritual DNA.
- We begin by faith and must also grow by faith.
- Abraham is a great example because God does not change how He trains His people.
- The best training places often come when we possess no confidence in what we can see.

Sharing grief (Genesis 23:1-2)

- Sarah, Abraham's longtime wife, died at the age of 127.
- God does not dismiss special times of grief, nor should we. Abraham mourned and wept for Sarah.
- Chapter 23 largely records the purchase of a burial cave.
- Grief and crisis can become refined places of training rather than occasions for bitterness or despair.

The trial

Buying Sarah's burial place was not merely a financial matter. Abraham had been promised the land, yet at this late stage he still had to purchase a small burial plot. The situation placed the unfulfilled promise directly before him.

"To your descendants I will give this land." (Genesis 12:7) "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it." (Genesis 15:7)

Our opportunity

- We can become bitter or despair when God's promises seem delayed.
- Or we can trust God to work out His purpose.
- Abraham grieved, acted responsibly, and took the next step of obedience.
- In Genesis 24, he continued moving forward concerning the promised descendants.
"With respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform." (Romans 4:20-21)

Understanding God's plans

- We do not always see the full promise realized in our lifetime.
- God may work through our lives in ways that continue through our children and later generations.
- Faith's great trial is to delight in God even when we do not see the promised result in our time.
- Faith rests in the character of the One who made the promise.

Our next step

- Prepare for crises of faith before they come.
- Do not surrender to bitterness or despair.
- Grieve honestly, then take the next step in obedience.
- Delight in God who makes the promises more than in the visible realization of them.

Discussion questions

1. Why were the promised son and promised land so important to Abraham?
2. How do bitterness, doubt, and despair arise from what we think are broken promises?
3. What guidance can we gain from Abraham's response to grief and delay?
4. Using Abraham's situation, describe how faith grows.