

Abraham, The Friend of God

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James 2:23

James, in telling about the importance of “doing” as well as “believing”, mentions Abraham as the friend of God.

James 2:23, *“And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.”*

This was twice stated in the Old Testament.

- 2 Chron. 20:7, *“Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?”*
- Isa. 41:8, *“But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.”*

Moses is the only other person having been designated as such in the Bible. Surely, having been so designated, this man is worthy of some study.

God chose Abraham to be the one through whom we can be blessed.

Gen. 12:1-4, *“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.”*

He is said to be the father of all them that believe.

Rom. 4:11, *“And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.”*

This one, who bears such close relationship to the believer, was God's friend. Surely, we want to know more about this man who was called the friend of God.

Abraham had great faith.

- James 2:21-23, *“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.”*
- Gen. 15:6, *“And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”*

The possession of great faith makes men pleasing in the sight of God.

Heb. 11:6, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*

There have been countless men throughout the Bible who have shown their faith in God. This is something that we all have opportunity to do in pleasing Him, as well. So often, people say they believe in God, but not so much as to follow everything He says.

Several years ago, I was talking to a workmate about becoming a Christian. She seemed to agree with everything I had to say to her. Finally, she said, “I know the Bible says I must be baptized, but I think he will excuse me in this case, because I have a fear of water.” I have heard people say that to some God has a door open for them, and for others who cannot for some reason enter that way, he has a window open for others. Where do people come up with such silly notions. It is certainly not from the Bible. If we try to enter any other way, He considers us a thief and a robber.

Abraham was promptly obedient.

- Heb. 11:8, *“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”*

- Heb. 11:17, *“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,”*

Noah showed complete trust in God by building an ark for the pending flood, when it had not even rained upon the earth previous to the flood. The earth was watered by dew, and not by rain. Abraham showed complete trust in God by going to someplace he didn't even know. He didn't hesitate; he acted immediately upon God's call.

Abraham showed great trust in God and obedience when he was told to sacrifice his own son, Isaac, upon the altar.

Gen. 22:9-12, *“And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”*

That's a lot of trust and obedience. The vast majority of even religious people in the world would not go so far as Abraham did.

We must obey Him in order to please Him.

Matt. 7:21, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”*

Consider James 1:21-25 again in this connection, *“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”*

Abraham feared God.

Gen. 22:12, *“And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”*

You may have heard some people say they choose to love God, and not to fear Him. This is not what God commanded. He commanded both.

- Deut. 6:1-2, *“Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.”*
- Eccl. 12:13, *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”*

Yes, we are to love God, but we are also to have a reverential fear of Him, as a child learns obedience from his father. Every parent should understand this concept. The prophet says this is one of the essentials in the whole duty of man.

Abraham had an interest in others.

Gen. 18:23-32, *“And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty’s sake. And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there. And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty’s sake. And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten’s sake.”*

God also had such interest.

John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

Paul had such interest.

- Rom. 1:14-16, *“I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”*
- Rom. 10:1-3, *“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”*

Do we have such interest in others?

- Phil. 2:4, *“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”*
- Matt. 9:36-38, *“But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”*

Do we have this kind of interest in others? Not only in taking care of their physical needs, but their spiritual needs, as well?

Abraham had respect for God’s institutions.

Gen. 18:19, *“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”*

We need to have great respect for God’s institutions, also. This includes the home, the church, and even the government.

Eph. 6:1-9, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.”

The church is called the bride of Christ. As the bride is subject to the husband, the church is also subject to Christ.

Note - when a couple wed, the bride takes the name of the husband. Despite recent trends, this has been around from the very beginning.

Gen. 5:2, “Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.”

Some think they can obey God, but not human governments.

Rom. 13:1-6, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.”

Titus 3:1, “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,”

Abraham was unselfish.

Gen. 13:1-12, “And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; Unto the place of the altar, which he had made

there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom."

A Christian must care and share if he wants to be a friend of God.

James 1:27, *"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."*

We are told how we can be friends with God.

John 15:14, *"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."*

Have you begun this friendship? Can you expect to be called His friend short of obeying Him?

You will have problems in doing right. You will sin. God will forgive you as an erring child when you meet the requirements.

- Acts 8:22, *"Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."*
- 1 John 1:8-10, *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."*

Conclusion.

If you have never obeyed the Gospel in becoming a Christian, you have always the invitation extended to you to become a friend of God.

Faith. Heb. 11:6, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*

Repentance.

- Luke 13:3, *“... except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*
- Acts 17:30, *“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.”*

Confession.

- Rom. 10:9, *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”*
- Acts 8:37, *“And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”*

Baptism.

- Mark 16:16, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*
- Acts 2:38, *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”*
- 1 Pet. 3:21, *“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”*
- Acts 22:16, *“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”*

