

Abraham BELIEVED God. *What more powerful statement of faith can there be than those three simple words?* Abraham believed God. Let's make a very important distinction about this statement. **It doesn't say that Abraham believed in God.** It says, "*Abraham believed God,*" **and because of his belief in what God said, Abraham was credited with righteousness.** It wasn't just that Abraham believed "in God" as in the belief that "God exists," or that some superhuman being created the universe. Abraham believed what God had to say the way one friend believes another. **That seems to be a very important consideration when it comes to the way God interacts with us.**

One summer in the village of Crete, the drought of the past winter threatened the crops. The priest in the local church told his congregation: "*The only thing that will save us is for us to offer a special litany of rain. Therefore, I ask that you go back to your homes, fast during the week, and believe that the rains will come. Then return next Sunday for the litany of rain.*" The villagers listened to him and fasted during the week as he had told them. On Sunday morning, they returned to the church. But as soon as the priest saw the people filing into the church, he was furious. "*Go away,*" he shouted to them. "*I will not do the litany. You do not believe.*"

"*But, Father,*" they protested, "*we fasted just like you told us and we came back today believing as you asked us. Why are you being so harsh to us?*" "*Believe, you say?*" the priest questioned. "*And where are your umbrellas?*"

And where are your umbrellas? My guess is that if the local weather forecasters predict rain, you will be prepared with your umbrellas.

But if God tells that his son will return to earth as the sovereign judge of all and you need to get this urgent message out to others, you would probably question its relevance to your life. You would think to yourself, "I believe it, but it hasn't happened in 2,000 years. I doubt it will happen in my lifetime."

If God told Abraham it was going to rain in the middle of the desert, Abraham would run for cover. When God told ***the old man Abraham*** that he was going to become a father, even in his old age, Abraham began to build a cradle and get a nursery put together. When God told Abraham that he would be the "father of many nations" and his offspring would be too numerous to count, Abraham began to divvy up his land mentally. When God told Abraham to pick up everything and move to a new home, Abraham wasted no time in packing his belongings and following God's command. **ABRAHAM 'BELIEVED' GOD.** *Abraham responded to God because Abraham believed God.*

Even when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, upon an altar in the mountains, Abraham believed that it was the right thing to do. And he believed he had to do it because God told him to do it. Only when an angel of God stopped him and gave him a way out did Abraham change his course of action. That, too, was because Abraham believed God.

And what did Abraham's belief get him? Initially, it brought ridicule. Even his wife Sarah laughed at him. The very thought of a ninety-year-old woman and a man on the brink of the century mark having their first child together was just too much. But God showed them both it was not a laughing matter. Abraham's belief brought him challenge and turmoil. He had to walk the streets of Sodom and Gomorrah searching in vain for enough righteous people to save the cities. Because he believed God, he found himself in a situation where he had to lie about his wife and say that she was his sister in order to save his life. Even though Abraham believed God, he didn't always trust God's wisdom. Even though he believed God, he didn't always want to hear what God said. He didn't always want to hear that God demanded righteousness from his people. But he was more than ready to believe that through the covenant God made with Abraham, people could be credited with righteousness through their faith.

What did Abraham's belief get him? Ultimately... IT GOT HIM SALVATION.

LOOK AT WHAT OTHERS BELIEVED.

- ***Noah believed God when he said there was going to be a great flood.*** He didn't just get down on his knees and pray for deliverance, he built an ark.

- **Moses believed God wanted his people, the Israelites, to be free from Egyptian captivity.** He didn't hide in the wilderness and wait to join the great exodus, he went back to the pharaoh, risking his life, and demanded, "Let my people go."
- **A young child named David believed God** when he told him he could defeat the giant Philistine named Goliath. Armed only with a slingshot, he headed into battle and won.
- **John the Baptist believed God when he told him that the Messiah was in the world.** He preached repentance of sins to a wicked world and thousands turned to God.
- **Jesus believed God and stood strong** when he stood in front of Pontius Pilate and said nothing in his own defense. Jesus believed God as he carried his own cross along the path to Calvary.
- **The disciples of Jesus believed God when their resurrected leader** told them to go into all nations, baptizing and making disciples of all peoples.

YES, THEY ALL BELIVED GOD. It wasn't always easy to follow through on their belief, but they all believed. **Noah** had to watch the destruction of humankind. **Moses** had to take the harsh judgment of his people as he led them for forty years. Then he had to stay behind as they crossed over into the Promised Land. **David** became a great king of God's people, but the road to greatness was paved with treacherous curves. **John the Baptist** before Jesus, and the **Disciples after Jesus, all sacrificed their lives for believing God.**

****AND Jesus, himself, believed God even as he hung up on the cross and gave up his life.**

Many great people believed God. They went beyond "believing in" God, to "believing" God.

Believing, however, didn't always mean that they blindly ran into something. Sometimes they hesitated. Sometimes, it took a little convincing on God's part. The prophet, Jonah, for example, didn't want to believe God. He didn't like the outcome that God had planned. **But in the end, with the help of a great fish, Jonah's belief won out and God's plan was carried through.**

Are we so different? We believe God. We believe that Jesus came into the world to die for our sins. We believe in the **promise of Jesus, and we put our faith in that promise.**

And yet we still hold back when it comes to putting that faith to the test in our day-to-day living. **We don't always want to do what we know God is telling us to do.** When we look at a lifetime, we can accept the concept of God's grace by putting our faith in Jesus for eternal life. But when it comes to putting that same confidence in Jesus to see us through the rigors of the next day, we become anxious and we hesitate to trust him completely. What we need to learn is that eternity starts today. Jesus' saving grace is just as applicable for getting us through income tax time as it is for getting us through the gates of heaven.

OUR LIFE LONG CHALLENGE IS WHETHER WE LIVE OUR LIFE, "BELIEVING IN GOD" OR "BELIEVING GOD." *For many people it is enough that they believe in God. They never quite get beyond belief in God to where they are able to believe what God says.*

For them, simply putting their trust in the fact that GOD EXISTS is enough. Believing "in God" becomes the basis for their concept of salvation. With this type of thinking which is currently wide-spread in our world, it doesn't really matter what you believe about God, as long as you believe in some kind of god.

Imagine, if you will, a tightrope stretched across the street between two tall buildings (you might insert the names of two well-known buildings in your town or city, or you might name some high spot with which your people are familiar). That's a pretty good drop. A man stands at one end of the wire and announces his intent to walk across the wire from one side to the other. A crowd gathers to watch because what he intends to do is dangerous, not to mention, a bit strange. The tightrope walker asks the crowd if they believe he can make it across. They respond that they believe he can do it in order to encourage him to take the risk. Carefully, very slowly, he teeters his way across, almost falling, but not quite; then dances on the wire proving that the crowd was right to believe him. Reaching the other side, he holds up a wheelbarrow and again asks the crowd if they believe he can push it across the wire ahead of him. Some nod their agreement that they believe; others shrug their shoulders in a "not too sure" response. The tightrope walker then singles out a man who had nodded and points to him. "Sir," he asks, "do you believe I can make

it?" The man responds, "I sure do." The tightrope walker says to the man, "*Then prove your faith by riding in the wheelbarrow.*"

Jesus has promised to guide our lives over the dangerous courses it will lead us. **Would you ride in the wheelbarrow if Jesus were pushing it?**

SOME THINGS HAVE TO BE BELIEVED TO BE SEEN!!! If we don't believe the powerful words God has spoken to us, we will never see the marvelous things GOD CAN ACCOMPLISH IN OUR LIVES.

Because Abraham believed WHAT GOD SAID TO HIM, he was credited with RIGHTEOUSNESS. It was his belief, and the faith he demonstrated in that belief, that made him righteous before God. Not his works, not his attempts at impressing God, but only by following through on believing what God told him.

In his letter to the Romans, Saint Paul says that if we work for wages, then we expect to get paid; we expect something to be due us. It's the old adage: A day's pay for a day's work. But if we don't do the work, and still get paid, then it's a gift. It's something we get undeserved. **THAT IS CALLED GRACE.**

Abraham and all the others were credited with righteousness as a gift. It came not through anything they did, but only through what they believed. And they believed God when he said, "*My grace is sufficient.*"

The God "*who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist*" has told us that his promise comes to us by FAITH and FAITH alone. We should rely solely on the grace of God for our salvation. And that grace is guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring and to each of us through Jesus.

God is offering us a gift. He truly offers it with no strings attached.

DO MORE WITH YOUR LIFE THAN JUST "Believe in God..." BELIEVE GOD, like Abraham did. AND SEE WHAT AMAZING CHANGES & EVENTS CAN TAKE PLACE FOR YOU. Amen.