Genesis 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse anyone who dishonors you. All the families of the earth will be blessed in you.

I hear it all the time and I don’t necessarily believe it all the time. It is that simple statement that many people like to make when they find out I am a pastor. They will say to me: “I believe in God!” I don’t think they have given that statement, that confession a great deal of thought.

What does it mean when you say, “I believe in God?” I think there are a number of things that need to be true for that statement to be true. For instance: “What God do you believe in?” Do you believe in the God of the Bible? Not as you think He is, for when you say you believe in the God of the Bible that means you believe what God says he is. That means you believe God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons and yet one God. We may not understand it completely but it is clearly what God’s Word proclaims.

If you believe in the God of the Bible that also means you believe that God is almighty, all-knowing, present everywhere, gracious, kind, compassionate, just, righteous and without any evil at all. We learned that lesson the other day in our week day Bible class. In 1 John 1:5 we heard this very truth of God: **“God is light. In him there is no darkness at all.”** You can’t ascribe to God evil. You can’t blame God for the evil and troubles, the woes and difficulties of this world. And if you don’t know who to blame, then that is probably a good indication that you don’t believe in God because clearly you don’t have a clue as to what God has said.

Let’s just stick with 1 John and what he tells us for now. Verse 6: **“If we say we have fellowship with him but still walk in the darkness, we are lying and do not put the truth into practice.”** This passage isn’t speaking about you and I falling into sin or that fact that we have sinful lives. It is telling you that if you choose to walk in sin, decide that sin is your right and privilege then when it comes to the confession: “I believe in God” you are a liar! The Christian works at putting God’s light into practice.

Verse 7: **“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”** Simply put, you can’t ignore, whitewash, dismiss or deny the issue of sin in this world. When God tells us something is a sin and you decide it is not, God makes it clear you are only deceiving yourself, you do not have the truth of God nor do you have faith in God. Important to this truth is verse 10 too. **“If we say we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his Word is not in us.”** This line is there because the Holy Spirit of God knew in the future men would toss aside God’s Word as just an a bunch of pious writings from men and not the truth of God. You can do that, but understand that God has said that if you do, you call him a liar which is further proof that his Word, Jesus is not a part of your life! That means you don’t believe in God!

What I am getting at is that faith in God is something very specific. It means you know who the true God is and that you believe his Word to be the truth in absolutely everything. It also means you believe the promises and wonders of his word and that you have a right understanding of the message of salvation that is found in His Word, Jesus! It all goes together. Faith is a complete package. It impacts us, directs us, and moves us! Faith is something important.

This morning we have a wonderful example of faith for our lives. It is the example of Abram. Let’s look at our text under this theme: **A LESSON ON FAITH.**

Here is our introduction to Abram, we know him best by the fuller name Abraham, so excuse me as I speak with you if I interchange the names. Abram lived in the city of Haran, that’s the city his father Terra moved to at the command of God. Actually Genesis 11 tells us the family had set out for the land of Canaan but they stopped in Haran. We don’t grasp what happened that they never made it to the land of Canaan, but do note that Abram’s father had originally been the one called to go and he didn’t make it. So when Abram is 75 years old the Lord calls Abram to continue the trip to the land of Canaan.

I hope you noticed verse 4? It said, **“So Abram went, as the Lord had told him. Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.”** Isn’t that the wonder of faith? God said…and it was so! I want you to particularly notice that because I do think this is one of the very foundations that constitutes faith. God said and it is so. Mind you, Abram and his family are going to make this 500 mile trip at a time when such a trip was a big deal, a hardship, a veritable trial in every way. On a good day of travel you might make 5 miles a day, after all you have to move your family, your herds and flocks and all the other people that are with you. Let’s say you make 8 miles a day. People that is still a trip that is going to take you some 63 days or better to make. It was an arduous trip. I point that out because you need to let it sink into your head how faith works: God said and it was so! Trouble, trial, hardship, doesn’t matter. God said! Abram went!

Unfortunately I do think that most people are more like Terra. Initially Terra went too, but somewhere along the line Terra determined that what God wanted was too hard or something because Terra stops. Is that your faith? It starts out good and strong but eventually the stress and strain of walking God’s way, of staying in the light, confessing sin, and trusting in God’s gracious goodness can become to us, rather overwhelming. Maybe that’s because we are focused on ourselves rather than on God’s plan and goodness? Either way, I want you to grasp that Abram went. It was a tough trip and yet Scripture doesn’t even speak of the trip but in verse 5 we hear, **“Eventually they arrived in the land of Canaan.”** That is faith in action. Just do. Follow what God says. Believe and walk in the light. What a great example this is for us on just what faith is to be.

What else can we learn about faith? We could break a number of things down and speak individually of them but I am going to kind of condense the lesson this way. Listen if you would to the promises of God to Abram. **“I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great. You will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse anyone who dishonors you. All families of the earth will be blessed in you…I will give this land to your descendants.”** Again I want to stress that all of these verses are promises of God to Abram.

Abram believed these promises. Now as far as I know, the only promises that Abram actually experienced in his life was the one that said **“I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse anyone who dishonors you.”** We can see those words came true as we study the rest of Abram’s life. Even when Abram makes foolish choices, God protects him and causes blessings to come his way. Again I want to emphasize that, Abraham saw only one of these promises actually come true and yet Abraham believe every single promise of God.

For instance, Abram didn’t live to see the great nation he produced. He saw one child and his son’s family. That was it. Abram didn’t live to see his name become great and yet here we are some 4,000 years later still talking about this guy and his faith. Abram didn’t grasp how he was a blessing in his life and yet, here we are blessed because of this man and his faith. Abram didn’t live to see the whole earth blessed in himself…that is the promise of the Savior to come and yet it happened. For that matter, grasp that last promise of God found here. Abram finally arrives in this land that God tells him to go to and God says, **“I will give this land to your descendants.”** Right then and there Abram knew this land was not going to be his but rather would only belong to his descendants…and at this point Abraham doesn’t even have a child!!! Yet we are told that Abram believed the Lord God. He trusted that what God said was true and reliable and that God had the power to bring it all about. That is faith! Trust in God! Even if you don’t think you see it, even if you don’t think you experience his power, you still trust that what God has declared and promised is true! Faith is about trust in God!

So, when Abraham did finally have a child some 25 years later and God told him to sacrifice that child to him do you know what Scripture says of that? It says that Abraham reasoned that since it was his only son who carried the promise of the Savior of the world that even if he did sacrifice him God had to raise him from the dead because God was not and never would be a liar! That is faith!

And just so you know, remember that it would be Abraham, Isaac and then Jacob. Jacob’s descendants would end up in Egypt for 400 years and then they would come out and they would be the descendants who do inherit the land that God had promised. That promise is not coming true for another 827 years by my calculations. And still Abram believed the Lord.

Or how about this action of faith, recorded for us twice in this section. **“Abram built an altar there to the Lord….he moved….there he built an altar to the Lord and proclaimed the name of the Lord.”** Please note that born and moved by faith, Abram gave worship and praise to the Lord his God! That’s what faith does. This is not some sort of private thing he is doing. He builds an altar. It is clear that this altar is a place to give thanks and praise, worship and honor to God. Abram also makes sure that those around him are aware of what he is doing because that is the meaning of the phrase: **“he proclaimed the name of the Lord.”** Abram preached to others. Certainly he told all in his household about the wonder of the Lord his God. And it is clear that he was also not shy to make sure others heard about the truth of this God. Abram proclaimed God. He made sure that people knew who God was and what God was about. He made sure to lead people in praise and thanks to this God. Faith in action.

Might I mention that Abram did this worship thing even before there was a Third Commandment! Remember it is not until the time of Moses that God gives us a recorded and precise message of what He wants done and what fulfills His will. God gave the Law because it was clear that the world and most of humankind was becoming so lost in sin that giving worship and praise to God was not a reality anymore. So God gave us his law so we could know exactly what He says is right and good. Yet Abram, purely motivated by faith, he builds altars and proclaims the name of the Lord. That’s what faith does. Faith is not happy, not content and not strong if it is not being exercised by the practice of giving God worship and praise the way God wants it done. Again, faith in action.

Now I want you to think about how all of this impacts you today. What does all of this mean for us today? First off, it reminds us that God is faithful and true in all that he says. Every promise made to Abraham came absolutely true! We have a record of that truth.

Second, one of the great promises to come true was that of the Savior Jesus. I was struck by the fact that I was preaching on this text this weekend. One of the books that I am currently reading is the Peoples’ Bible Teaching series. I am reading on Christ. Just before I sat to begin writing this sermon I read how Jesus had to be both true God and true man in order to be our Savior. This uniqueness of Jesus as true God and true man is reflected in this promise to Abraham. God said, **“All of the families of the earth will be blessed in you.”** In other words the Savior to come is going to be a descendant of Abraham. The Savior to come would be a real and actual person whose history could be traced back to this guy and this promise. That’s Jesus. Born of the virgin Mary by a miracle of the Holy Spirit and as to that human nature given to him in Mary Jesus is a direct descendant of Abram. That’s what, two thousand years or so before this promise of the Savior comes true. And yet, everyone who put there hope in this Savior to come, they receive the same benefits of eternal life and salvation that Jesus won for us. That’s because it is all about faith.

And since Jesus is the ultimate proof that God keeps his promises, then please, put your trust and hope in the very promises that God gives to you and me in Jesus. In Jesus our sins are forgiven by grace through faith. In Jesus God is with us and never deserts us. In Jesus God makes all things serve for our good, our eternal good and salvation. In Jesus God promises to never give us more than we can bear. In Jesus our faith will be kept strong and sure as we keep our eyes and hearts on Jesus and in the very Word of God. In Jesus eternal life and salvation, an inheritance with Abraham, is ours.

These are the promises of God in Jesus. Well, God said it…so it is! Have faith. Trust God! Be sure of God because you are sure of the Word of God. Live that faith. Live that faith because we can’t help but walk in the Light of God given in Jesus. Faith. Faith in what God has surely revealed in Jesus. Amen.