

## Washington church of Christ

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# The Washington Messenger

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**November 10, 2013**

## Order of Services Sunday November 10, 2013

Song Leader	Derald Sanchez
Prayer	Daniel Wydro
Preaching	Bob James
Lord's Supper	
Prayer for the Bread	Pete Ferencze
Prayer for the Cup	Arnold Thompson
Prayer for the Collection	David Osinski
Assisting at the Table	Brian Jeffries
Scripture Reading	Ralph Ruggiero
Morning Closing Prayer	Stan Thompson
Evening Opening Prayer	Bob Wydro
Announcements	Bill Duryea

## Schedule of Weekly Services

Sunday Morning Bible Classes	9:30 am
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 am
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00 pm
Wednesday Evening Bible Classes	7:30 pm
Thursday Morning Bible Study	11:00 am

### Thoughts on Faith ...

*Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, (Romans 4:18-20 NIV)*

When it comes to the subject of faith it is amazing how vague people become. It is said that to have a "lot of faith" is a good thing, and that there is often need for "more faith". People of "strong like faith" are admired ... those of "another faith" are often distrusted. In all of these common expressions of man's modern understanding of faith there is one major misapprehension ... the object of faith is what really matters!

The apostle Paul in our passage commends the faith of Abraham. I'd like to suggest that Abraham's faith is not exemplary simply because of its strength, but because its object was God. Through the years, people of faith in their own abilities have perished ... their faith was sincere, but sincerely wrong. An example of this can be seen all too often with today's so called "Faith Healers" who draw people to them through their claims of being able to heal sicknesses and diseases. If they are unable to "heal" a person they will often point to that person's lack of faith. I would counter that the person may have had great faith, but that their faith was in the wrong object, or person. It is much like people who had strong faith in thin ice and never lived to tell the tale but died by this faith. Others who had weak faith in thick ice were as safe as if they stood on concrete.

Abraham's faith was clearly related to his knowledge of its object. In the same way that the man on thick ice knows about its thickness before he exercises faith in it, so Abraham knew two things about his God whom he trusted...

*"... he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;" (Romans 4:17 NKJV)*

People all around Abraham believed in something, probably as fervently as he believed in God. But, of course, their experience was limited, not necessarily because of their faith, but because of the limitations of that in which they believed. Belief sometimes is nothing more than empty superstition, but intelligent faith knows intimately that in which it believes.

We should also note that Abraham's faith was expressed by a hope which believed "*contrary to hope.*" When we talk about hope we often convey a sense of hopelessness and desperation. We "*hope*" someone will show up or something will happen, but we have no real grounds for such hope. Abraham, naturally speaking, had no basis for believing that he would, in his old age, become the father of many nations. From the human perspective it was a hopeless situation. Nevertheless he believed in hope. His "*hope*" was rooted in God and His word. This gave it a ring of confidence rather than a touch of desperation. His faith was confidence in God. This reminds me of Paul's proclamation to Timothy...

*For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. (2 Timothy 1:12 NKJV)*

Another aspect of Abraham's faith is that it did not ignore the practical realities of his physical situation. Instead, he refused to be intimidated by his circumstances...

*Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. (Romans 4:19 NIV)*

Nothing is to be gained in terms of strengthening our faith by ignoring those factors which work against our faith. On the contrary, strong faith triumphs over difficulties it fully understands. Abraham was able to face the deadness of his own body because he believed in a God "*who gives life to the dead*" (Romans 4:17).

His inadequacy, therefore, became the arena in which God's power was to be shown instead of the place where his faith would sink without a trace. Abraham showed that faith links its knowledge of the person (God) with the difficulties that stand in faith's way and casts its lot with the reality of God in these situations.

Another lesson revealed in Abraham's faith here is that it was consistent in its progress...

*He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, (Romans 4:20 NKJV)*

The word in the Greek manuscripts that is rendered *waver* in most translations and *doubt* in others, literally means, "*to have two minds or opinions*". When we apply this to Abraham's situation we can better understand the meaning, for when he considered his circumstances on the one hand, Abraham must have been tempted to sink into despair ... yet when he considered the promise of God as it related to his circumstances he must have been overjoyed.

The tendency would have been to vacillate between the two extremes. This he refused to do, preferring instead to patiently trust God to work through His plan. In so doing he quietly "gave glory to God." The more opportunities he was given to praise God in faith and be reminded of the promise of God irrespective of circumstances, the more he was led into a stronger trust in God. It's similar to people nervously boarding airplanes to Europe and calmly settling down halfway across the Atlantic. They settle down not because God gives them more faith, but because the longer they sit on the plane and it stays up, the more they learn it is worthy of trust,

and, accordingly, they trust it more. They are strengthened in their faith through the ongoing experience of the faithfulness of faith's object.

As it was for Abraham, so it will be with us, when we make God the complete and solitary object of our faith.

May we all have the conviction expressed of him towards God ...

*Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. (Romans 4:20-21 NIV)*

### ***Our Prayer List...***

***For Spiritual Responsiveness*** – Georgia DeLorenzo ... Sondra DeLorenzo ... all of our wayward members

***For Physical Healing*** – John Baxter ... Larry Smith (Sharon Ferencze's brother) ... Frank and Antoinette Salerno (Annie's parents) ... Mary Celentano's sister

***For Wisdom and Good Judgment*** – The Leaders of our congregation ... the leaders of our nation

***For God's Care and Good Providence*** – Our young people away at college ... Our young people here at Washington ... our members who are traveling ... the men and women in military service ... our congregation.

## ***EVENTS AND NOTES***

UPCOMING EVENTS THAT WE ARE AWARE OF ARE ...

- ▲ OUR NEXT THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY WILL BE ON NOVEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup>, AT 11:00AM.
- ▲ THE PISCATAWAY CHURCH OF CHRIST WILL HOST A FALL BIBLE SERIES ON NOV. 15 -17, 2013 WITH BUDDY PAYNE FROM FLORIDA COLLEGE. A FLYER IS ON THE BULLETIN BOARD WITH TOPICS AND TIMES.
- ▲ THE EAST ORANGE CHURCH OF CHRIST WILL HOST A GOSPEL MEETING AS WELL ON NOV. 15 – 17, 2013 WITH JASON LONGSTRETH FROM FLORIDA COLLEGE.
- ▲ THE NEXT MEN'S BUSINESS MEETING WILL BE DECEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup>
- ▲ THE NEXT LADIES BIBLE STUDY WILL BE ON DECEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup> AS WELL.