

Leadership And Covenants (Part Seventeen)

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I was very interested in Bill Onisick's sermonette, because this week I happened to see almost all of a *Star Trek: The Next Generation* program. We were talking about this last night and we came to the conclusion that this program was probably filmed in the 1990s or early 2000. It was the subject material that they were going through on this particular program that fits into what Bill was talking about.

The problem for that particular program was that they were trying to solve what they were going to do regarding the new creatures that they were creating. When would they know when these things had life, what we would determine as life? Because in this program they were already solving problems that had to be thought through by each one of these robots that they had created, and a solution reached.

They were doing that and at the end of the program they had determined that they would say that these robots had life depending upon their conduct, that is, what they considered to be righteous conduct. If they were making righteous choices then they would have to conclude that they were capable of thinking about conduct, between right, and wrong, and that these things actually had life.

How long ago was this that they were considering this on Star Trek? It was no more than about 20 years ago. Bill's research advanced the speed of the operations considerably. It shows that these people are reaching forward to things that get into the very area that Star Trek was concerned about.

We are going to begin this sermon in I John 5 and you will begin to see a little about how the Star Trek program touches very lightly on what we are talking about here.

I John 5:19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

My purpose in my previous sermon in this series was to transition from the historical records that God preserved in His word of Noah, the flood, and the Noahic covenant, to the Abrahamic covenant. What we saw is clear evidence that if mankind is left to his choices without direct guidance from God, it is not all that long timewise that mankind reverted to living as he had prior to the Flood. It is one of those situations where God is out of sight, God is out of mind, and people revert, maybe because of inspiration and guidance of Satan.

Despite the fact that Satan is not shown in the Bible records as specifically influencing conditions to move in any certain direction during this period of time that we covered, we must never allow ourselves to forget that the whole world lies under the influence of Satan. He is a very real, invisible reality. We never see him but he is there, and we believe that he is there because of what we see mankind doing, and because of God's revelation in the Bible.

Satan is never out of the picture regarding his activity of deceiving and therefore influencing mankind's choices about how we should live. We should understand that if evil is being committed, he is in the midst of that evil. He was somewhere near at hand.

A number of years ago I saw the movie "Time Bandits." It is one of a series of movies that have been made for peoples' entertainment and they are not really thinking about what they are being shown—the real purpose of the producer and director. There are quite a number of movies that you might look upon as children's entertainment, but those things did not start out as children's entertainment. Once the movie makers got their hands on them they turned them into what was far different for what they had been originally written.

One of these is the "Wizard of Oz." Do you realize that the man who wrote this never intended that to be a children's entertainment? That was an expose of the very kind of thing that Martin was talking about in his commentary. It

is how governments, bankers, make money appear out of nothing, all the while the Wizard of Oz who was turning out this fiat money is behind the curtain hiding the real direction and purpose for what it is going on.

Another is the book *Through the Looking Glass*, which they turned that into “Alice in Wonderland.” When that was originally written the author intended that it be an expose of the fanatic manipulations of government, and how stupid they are in the things that they do.

Back to “Time Bandits.” It was shown as being dwarves who were jumping all over the times that man has been on earth, and everywhere they go they create chaos. They really were supposed to be human beings, but they were portrayed in the movie as a half dozen dwarves, very acrobatic. Every time they broke through time elements and got into a period of time, they created chaos wherever they were. One of the things in that movie, which I did not catch on to it until the very end, they depicted Satan as peering down at mankind and all of this chaos that men were doing. All the while there was Satan sitting up there with a big pot of stew stirring everything up. You got the picture that the original author wanted us to see, that Satan was stirring things up in the world.

We are living in a situation in which we are being drawn toward something that is very important, and it fits into the very thing that is the main theme of this sermon. I mentioned before that Satan is never out of the picture regarding his activities of deceiving, and therefore influencing mankind’s choices about how we should live.

The period of time we are going through in the Bible, despite efforts that God made to place teachers of His truths before the people, that is Noah, Shem, and their families, so that they would have clear choices available to use their free moral agency in doing, the people very clearly prefer to follow Satan and their own carnal nature.

God knew this would occur. Though to some extent it was disappointing to Him I am sure, He moved on with His own premeditated purpose and plan, calling Abram, presenting to him a covenant containing promises of stupendous proportion and this is what we will be focusing on in this sermon.

Back again in thought to I John 5:19. Almost every time I have referred to this particular verse, I have concentrated on “the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” As we go through this sermon today, what I want us to think of is that “we know that we are of God.” Do we believe it? Do we act like it? That is the counterbalance, if I can put it that way, that God offers to you and me, and He has given it to us in order to be able to control the conduct that we have in our life, and not fall under the sway of what Satan is doing as he stirs the pot. We must *never* allow ourselves to lose sight of a fact that should be clear to us. Our Creator God, most certainly must not ever be allowed out of our spiritual sights. This is because we are among those few chosen to whom He has revealed Himself and His purpose. *We are of God.*

There is most definitely the history of the world in general occurring and is being recorded. But there is also an overarching purpose, almost as though it is a separate creation that God is working out within the framework of what is clearly visible on the surface. We do not ever want to lose track of that. God is creating His own program at the same time He is directing the history of this world. We are of God. We are not of Satan and we dare not follow what he might want to do with us.

As we enter Genesis 12, the history of the world is about to make a dramatic, far-reaching turn that will impact history as long as life and time remains. That is forever! This is really a most significant chapter in all of the Bible, especially its first seven verses. Think of those numbers. You now that God created the book, Genesis 12:1-7, two very significant biblical numbers, and they are placed right where we are. Twelve is the number in the Bible for new beginnings, and this is new in terms of mankind. Seven has to do with a perfect and complete operation that is worked out. It is not worked out completely yet but now we are a part of it. We have a significant responsibility to God within it.

Genesis 12:1 Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.”

These are twenty of the most meaningful and momentous words spoken in the history of mankind. It presents us with a triangle, there is God, there is

Satan, and there is us. Abram's responsibility, and the responsibility of all who enter into the same covenant as Abram, is to trust God. We are to trust God's Word, and therefore God's character. Abram did, and now the question yet remains unanswered for us. Here is what God commanded to Abram, and He has commanded to all who enter into the same covenant.

First: Go to a land I will show you. Second: I will make you a great nation. Three: I will bless you. Four: I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. Five: I will bless those who bless you. Six: I will curse him who curses you. Seven: I will give your descendants this land.

As we begin today we are going to briefly draw comparisons between the "I wills" and another group of "I wills" that also appears in the Bible. They were uttered by one of far different character than the God of heaven.

Isaiah 14:12-14 "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt My throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'"

These "I wills" were made long before the "I wills" of Genesis 12:1-3. This is where we begin. I draw your attention to these because I want you to briefly compare what God promised Abram, against the plan of the people that we read off in my last sermon, made for themselves, following the Flood in Genesis 10 and 11, and Satan boastfully made plans for himself. Do you think he is not going to do all in his power to keep us, to hinder us, from having God's "I wills" fulfilled in our life? He most surely is. Because to him we are an impediment within the way of him achieving what he has boasted of.

Know this and rely on it: regardless of what men or Satan says or do, God always carries out what He says and He is to this day carrying it out and will continue carrying it out when Christ returns. As I said earlier, what we are reading there in Genesis 12:1-7 is something that will be around for all of time. We have entered into the great plan that God is carrying out through

the descendants of Abraham. God's Word is sure, everybody else's plans have already failed.

There are many researchers who believe, whether you do or not, I hope you are going to be moved in this direction, that Abraham is, next to Jesus Christ, the second most important person in the purpose that God is working out. God devotes fourteen *full* chapters just on Abraham. That is more than any other personality in the Bible. The key word here is concentrated, or full. Moses, for instance, appears in more chapters but often the context he is found in is not concentrated on him. He is there as a part of it, but it is not concentrated on him.

These fourteen full chapters on Abraham stresses the importance of Abraham to God's purpose. You can be sure this is a man that God wants us to learn from and emulate in our life. There is no doubt that both of these men, Abraham and Moses, are important figures in Israel's history, and in God's purpose, but the researchers believe that Moses is not as spiritually important to our day to day living by faith as Abraham is in his examples.

We will continue looking at Abram a little bit more closely. Did God look down from heaven until He spotted a man living in Ur of the Chaldeans who already had faith, and He said, "Now there is a man who will trust Me. I will call him, and work out My purpose in, and through him."?

I Corinthians 1:26-31 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are mighty [Were things different with Abraham? He was already wise, already great, already educated? No! He was exactly the same as you and me.]; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh [nobody including Abraham] should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and

righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that as it is written [Abram had to grow and overcome like everybody else.],
“He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”

I do not know why God chose Abram. We do know what God says, He does not need any of us. He did not need Abram, but He chose him. God has given us here in I Corinthians 1 a general pattern that indeed shows that He does not need any of us including Abram, otherwise our calling, or Abram’s calling, would be on the basis of works—the works of the individual called. Salvation is always by grace from beginning to end.

We will continue with Abram by going to Romans 3. In your mind’s eye you have to fit Abram into this description that is given, and know that like Abram did, God expects you and me to grow as well.

Romans 3:10-12 As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no not one.”

Again, remember my statement. I do not know why God chose Abram. I do know that God does not turn away from letting us know that He does not need any of us. We are all His creation. God is Creator, we are the clay, and that includes Abram. What God made out of Abram; He can do with us too. God should never be out of the picture and this covenant that you have made with God, the covenant in Genesis 12, is our point of belief that if He can do it with Abram, He can do it with us.

Do we understand that it is God who creates what truly becomes *good* in us? It was Jesus who stated in the book of Luke. I know you are familiar with this but I want to drill it into our minds.

Luke 18:19 So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good?
[You would think that if there was ever anyone good it was Jesus Christ.] No one is good but One, that is, God.”

God is always, with every person He calls, and this includes Abram, beginning His creative processes from ground zero. The clay is raw for

everyone of us. It must be shaped. Let us look at Isaiah 51 and the first two verses.

Isaiah 51:1-2 “Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness [This was the Israelitish people. Right now, when we apply it in this age, it is the church.], you who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. [Who are they? Verse 2 tells us.] Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you; for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him.”

These two verses are written in what I would call a semi-derogatory sense. It is essentially saying regarding Abraham and Sarah, that they were nothing. God is saying, “I was the one who magnified them before your eyes.” “Here is this man,” He is again saying, “who is considered so highly by you the people who should be good judges.” Let us consider: is Abraham one you would consider a great man? He is not saying that those people should not consider him great. Yes, he was. He became a great man under the artistry and craftsmanship of God, so he is not trying to take that away from people. He should be highly respected.

God is not running Abraham down in any way. He is challenging the ones that this is directed to, to evaluate properly who and what really is important. It is what God makes of us. We have become part of the same covenant that Abraham was made part of so that God can create us into what He wants of us.

What God is saying here in Isaiah 51 is let us make sure that we set our sights properly. He is not taking away from the human greatness of Abraham. He is just reminding all of us that He was the one who created Abraham to be great.

There is more to this. We can add to it other personalities from the Bible. For instance, Job is to be highly respected and he speaks to us of hope. Hosea is another prophet of God, he shows in his life the love that God had, and still has for Israel. We admire them and that is fine, Abraham is the Bible's great example of faith.

Hebrews 11:6 Without faith it is impossible to please God.

You can sure that Abram pleased God.

We will look at what the Word of God says regarding Abram and what he became in his relationship with God.

II Chronicles 20:5-7 Then Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, and said: “O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You? Are you not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?”

Abraham’s title was God’s friend.

Isaiah 41:8 “But you, Israel are My servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham My friend.”

God Himself called Abraham “My friend.” He is singled out for that particular relationship.

James 2:23 And the scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God.

Abraham was not magnified with some awesome designation because of the way he lived his life. Would you not like to be known as God’s friend too? God shows us how to become God’s friend through Abram’s example. Take this another step further,

John 15:12-14 [In garden of Gethsemane just before Jesus was murdered.] “This is My commandment, that you love one another

as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."

We are beginning to see how Abraham became God's friend. His obedience to God was at the very highest level. He did not have some great office but he was God's friend, because he could always be trusted.

John 15:15 "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you."

Did you notice in the book of Isaiah where God called Israel servants? He signified not the same thing for Abraham. He was a friend. We must do what Abraham did—he lived by faith, he trusted God.

In this context that we are reading of here in John 15 just before Jesus' crucifixion, Peter rashly offered to die for Christ, but the reality was that he was not even ready to *live* for Christ! Christ corrected him immediately. He said, "Before this night is over you are going to deny Me three times." Does a friend do that? He was not even ready to live for Christ. His rashness made him open his mouth and say something that he never should have because he was not equal to what he was saying.

Are you beginning to get the point? This is what elevated Abram. Whatever God asked he did it. Even to the point that he was immediately ready to crucify his own flesh and blood! That is a high standard.

We are all sons of God and that is great. It is good, it is a step. That sonship that God has given to us is a once for all time gift that we have received as a result of our calling and our conversion. But friendship is the fruit that develops through a lifetime of obeying Jesus' command to love Him and the brethren. This is what Abram did in spades.

Turn to Luke 1. This is at the birth of John the Baptist, and he was going to be circumcised. Zechariah, his father, was inspired by God to utter this magnificent thing reminding all of us of what God is doing.

Luke 1:68 “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people [Zechariah is talking about something that has not occurred yet.]”

Luke 1:72-73 “To perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant [The Abrahamic covenant that we are now a part of.], the oath which He swore to our father Abraham [Abraham’s title is the father of the faithful.]”

A faithful person is one who is devotedly loyal, steadfast, and trustworthy. His manner of life is truly worth emulating with ours, in order for us to qualify to be one of His children, a part of His Family.

We will examine some of those “I wills.” We will have an overview of a historical setting when they were originally given, and that setting is what the Bible reveals at this point, long before what is now revealed to us in the end time. Remember that the Bible was not written all at one time, but by various authors over long periods of time. God inspired various authors to reveal to us various truths we need to trust for our salvation at this time.

When God uttered the “I wills” it was roughly 2,000 years after the creation. Follow this story line: As God began writing the Bible, He shows that He created Adam and Eve and offered them eternal life in fellowship with Him, in the Garden of Eden. However, their obedience to Satan exposed their self-centered disloyalty, they were not a friend of God’s. Simply put they did not believe Him, despite their literal physical closeness to God. They had more faith in their own personal choices than in His counsel.

Following their testing God then added judgments to the original covenant. However, tucked within those judgments is the first indication of salvation and deliverance from our sinfulness, in God’s promise of a descendant of Adam and Eve called the Seed, the prophesied Seed who will provide the leadership and salvation from a predicament that sin gets mankind into. However, biblical history shows Adam and Eve’s descendants continued to distrust their Creator and look for security elsewhere.

The Bible shows that though there were some faithful to Him for long periods of time, considerable overall decline, and mankind's behavior up to and through the Flood occurred. When we get to the Flood we are through 1656 years of man's history on earth.

Once again God mercifully steps into the breach to supply hope, and life for those of mankind willing to believe Him and by faith seek Him for the fulfillment of His promises. It is through the calling of Abram who was given God's unconditional promises in the I wills, that to those who trust God as Abram did living by faith, they will be given the grace to succeed in God's purpose.

I am going through this because I want you to see that God has not called us to failure. Abraham shows in his life that it can be fulfilled, and God is worth trusting.

What gifts will those who trust God be given by God that enables them to live up to the covenant's requirements as Abram did? Here is the answer from Jesus' own lips which we went through in my previous sermon. It was in His teaching to Nicodemus in John 3. We can glean it, if we *think*, through Jesus' teaching. They will be enabled grasp, to understand, to get, to perceive, and to see God's plan and purpose enveloping all of time, to all of mankind within the "I will" promises, and they will be motivated by faith to seek God within that covenant.

Brethren, that is a mouthful.

Nicodemus was stunned as he began to grasp what Jesus was saying to him. His response was, "How can these things be?" But you have to give him credit that he could see what an awesome thing that Jesus was saying. The second thing that can be gleaned from what Jesus said is they will be enabled to understand, to get, to *see the promised Seed prophecy fulfilled*, and the salvation given which was originally offered to Adam and Eve.

I am not saying that these things are going to happen all at once. We have to grow in the grace, the knowledge, and understanding of what Jesus was saying there. Nicodemus was stunned by what he grasped, even though he did not get the full picture. But Nicodemus eventually became a Christian.

The key factor for all of these people who are entering into this particular covenant is that once called, each one must, like Abram, live his life trusting God. That is the condition. If we do, we will be given the gift needed to get understanding to live it.

Hebrews 10:37-38 “For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry, Now the just [those living by faith] shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”

That is a flat-out declaration of a literal requirement of one who has made the Abrahamic covenant with and through Jesus Christ. I am not saying we must trust as flawlessly or to the same degree as Abram. Each of us will be judged against a measure of the gifts given us by God, and educated, devoted use of faith is the key. God has not given us something that is impossible with His help for us to do. It may be difficult from time to time, there may be some with some very high requirements as there were for Abram, but be very happy, be very pleased that it has been made with you and He is not going to require of you and me the same degree of faith that He required of Abram.

I know that I am very thankful that God has shown that He is so patient and merciful. He never requires more than we can give. It is helpful to grasp that with Abram a new biblical era is begun, and somewhat similar to the gifting that God gave to Adam and Eve through Seth. Remember, Seth was a gift to Adam and Eve so that there would be somebody who survive them, and would be a faithful person, not only to them, but to God.

Genesis 5 begins, we might say, a new family. From Seth comes some well-known biblical figures such as Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem. What I am leading up to here is, Abram a new line is beginning, and God is announcing it in this way.

The line of Seth is not being erased or anything, it is not going to be neglected, it will not be forgotten. Rather it is gently pushed aside and a new family and line begins with Abram. Even though he too is also of the Seth line, however slowly but surely that line fades into the past. The Abrahamic line becomes emphasized within the Scriptures from Genesis 12 on.

Eventually Abram becomes known as the father of the faithful, and this in turn has effects on defining the church as well as defining who the Israel of God is. And the effects of this covenant change continues for the *remainder of time*. This in turn is triggered and extenuated by the Messiah being born into Abraham's family through David, and ultimately opens the way of salvation for all people regardless of ethnicity.

In other words, you begin to see in Abraham how God is going to give salvation to all mankind. First, He has to get the line started, He has to build the family that He wants to be able to work with Him and Jesus Christ, who is not even born yet in the time that I am telling you about. This is why I told you earlier there are two things going on on earth at the same time. One is what God is directly doing, and the other is what the rest of the world is doing, but God is overseeing as He directs His Family through the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through David, and through Jesus Christ.

This is why I said to you earlier that this covenant involves all of time—forever. This is no little thing! It is probably the greatest deal that has ever been offered to us—to you and me, as an individual. It is not something to sneeze at, and just forget.

Are you beginning to see why he is called the father of the faithful?

Also beginning with Abram and his family, the subject material in the Bible gradually becomes more and more frequently spiritual in nature. Israel continues on but God is working within it to choose people for His Family.

We will begin looking more closely at the “I wills.” We will go through them one at a time.

The first one is “I will show you a land.”

When we look at this more closely it is possible that this is at least partially clarifies why Abram traveled first from Ur to Haran before moving on from Haran into Canaan. God was leading him in those directions, to those locations. This is something we pick up from understand what was going on. As I said earlier in my previous sermons, why did Abram not just walk the short way over to Canaan? He could have gone directly west toward Canaan and the trip would have only been about three hundred to four hundred miles. But the way that God lead him was a lot longer, *way longer*. This is a partial answer as to why Abram went in the direction that he did. He went in the direction because God was leading him and Abram was following. He was using his faith.

His movements in that direction thus allowed God for Abram to cut his ties more gently with the elements in his background that he undoubtedly had affection for. This included the country of his birth, the city of his birth, and the friendships, the business connections that he had already established in his homeland. Remember Abram was 75 years old. He was not just doing nothing those 75 years, he was making all kinds of connections in order to support himself and his wife.

So God led him away from there and He lead him north and west, from there following the Euphrates River to Haran. God allowed Terah, his father, to accompany him all the way to Haran, and then He allowed Terah, his father, to die. Thus Abram was free of the family ties except for Sarah who mattered most to him in this world,

Do you understand that God's calling of Abram was no different from the calling that we receive? God called Abraham and at least partly he did not know what was going on. Did you know exactly what was going on when God called you? He had to learn, and he had to exercise his faith in the little that he did know. I can say confidently that this may not have been fully understood by Abram. The parts of his family that did tag along seemed to be shown in the Bible as the ties being severe hindrances. I am thinking of Lot. It is probably very likely that God allowed Lot to live so that he would be a problem that Abram had to deal with.

However, Abram's faith was in God and therefore those things had to be sacrificed, the things that he sacrificed along the way from his affections and sacrificing them for his good, and by faith he kept moving whenever God revealed that it was time for him to do so.

Take note that much of that time was spent walking from Ur to Haran, then Haran to Canaan, which probably totaled very close to 1,000 miles of walking. Do you know what the symbol of walking is in the Bible? The only possible section that allowed for them to travel by boat was on the way up the River Euphrates, but it did not go all the way. I do not know whether Abram grasped what was going on, but he was literally walking with God and by faith he followed.

Are we willing to do that? What we are getting here from the father of the faithful are pictures of what is taking place in our life.

There is another factor involving walking by faith. Once Abram was within Canaan his walking was not ended. God moved him all over the place within the land of Canaan, and I am not sure why. He even walked to Egypt and got into trouble there by means of a sin, a half truth that almost created a major disaster. But God intervened. One thing is sure, and that is, actual possession of the land by Abram himself was not the single large issue for God, because Abram never did take actual possession of it.

God does not give us everything we want, or everything that we think that we need. Abram never really, legally, owned it. As the father of the faithful, there is a spiritual lesson here. It might be that that is way that we are to look upon our calling too. In one sense we are aliens just passing through, this is not our homeland for a great deal longer. What we are in is actually, literally, our inheritance, but the present reality is that it is not yet ours. We are heirs but not yet inheritors.

One more small step. It is a little thing, but in Genesis 12:1 in the King James and the New King James, it is translated in the past perfect tense to indicate that this command was said in an indefinite time in the past as

Genesis 12 begins. This might be somewhat misleading for some who are seeking for more precise timing. The Hebrew in this verse states it simply as a simple past tense.

Stephen, in Acts 7, states that it was said in Mesopotamia before Abram ever left Ur of the Chaldees to go to Haran and thus at this point in Genesis 12, God has not yet revealed the land that He was going to give Abram. Thus Stephen indicates God only commanded Abraham one time, and Abraham responded. He was one of those people who responded and never turned back.

So, from the beginning there is no doubt that Abram believed God's promise. Faith is what Abram is noted for, and his spiritual children must live by faith as well.

To me, apart from a specific gifting God may provide to enable us to carry out a certain responsibility, like within the church, as I Corinthians 12 indicates, faith in God is by far and away the most important general, spiritual characteristic to the successful spiritual outcome of life.