

At a big name event like the Boston Marathon they heighten security. It's in layers. Uniformed police officers patrol as an armed presence, some with dogs. Video cameras silently scan the crowd as monitors watch for any threats. Metal detectors in specific locations or maybe even VIP names on checklists to help keep most people out of areas. There are others I know I'm missing. These are the security measures we can see. They make people feel like protection is being taken seriously and someone is doing something. But you know there are protections we can't see. Hidden cameras, bomb detecting scanners, super technology devices that scan car license plate tags or facial recognition software. Armed security not wearing uniforms. And certainly there are other technologies being employed. We have to take someone's word for it because we can't see them.

Which do we appreciate more? It's the struggle between what we can see and trusting someone else's word. People have faced that with God since the beginning of time. It's a war we fight with ourselves, spiritual warfare. They're the moments where I just want God to show himself. I figure it would make things better or easier. But instead he continues to ask me and other believers to trust him sight unseen. That's hard and I lose that battle more than I want to admit.

If anyone had reasons for struggling with that spiritual warfare it was Abram. You might recognize him better as Abraham. Really the same person. God changed his name later in his life. We'll call him Abram because that's the way it is in the section recorded as the first lesson. Abram had reasons to struggle. We have reasons to struggle. Yet through studying Abram's life we can find reasons to...

**Trust in the Savior God
Believe God's plan
Set God's plan into motion**

If you've never moved for a job you could ask me about it. Moving means leaving behind comfortable. We left my family and Jennifer's family. We left all the friends from jobs and the community we lived in. We left a church where we had gotten close to some couples. We simply left it all behind and came to Oklahoma. It has been great being here, but moving still makes most people uncomfortable for a time. Abram didn't move for a job. God simply told him it was time to move. **"The Lord said to Abram, Leave your country, your people, and your father's household and go to the land I will show you."** These were comforts for Abram; things that would make him feel protected. Leaving these would mean going someplace unknown with people he wouldn't know. God gave Abram instructions and a plan, even though Abram couldn't see everything associated with the plan.

God gave directions and God gave promises, a whole cluster of promises. God promised Abram that God would make him a great nation, God would bless him, God would make him a blessing to others, God would bless those who blessed him, and God would make his name great. **"I will make you...I will make your name...I will bless those..."** God wasn't asking Abram to do anything alone, no leaping into the unknown. The Savior God was giving Abram promises that would enable trust in things Abram might have to wait a long time to see. Those promises led Abram to trust the Savior God and believe his plan.

The last promise was the big one. **"All peoples on earth will be blessed through you."** Salvation for the whole world would come through Abram. Not a gift Abram was able to give away himself, but God's gift shared with Abram and through him to the whole world. God stretched Abram's trust because at this moment Abram had no children, his wife couldn't have children, and he was seventy five years old. When Abram's eyes and his real life told him this wasn't possible the promises of God told him to trust the Lord, trust the Savior God. At just the right time God would send a descendant into Abram's family tree. The Savior God had a plan he was carrying out in his time. Based on the promises of God, Abram believed God's plan.

The gap between what my eyes or your eyes tell us and what God asks us to trust is real. It's a real part of spiritual warfare. Who can I trust? Do I only trust my eyes which tell me that we're in a drought and it doesn't seem that the situation is getting better? How will the crops or farmers survive another year with so little moisture? Do I only trust my eyes which see my own suffering and the suffering of people around me which isn't getting better, so that obviously I need to take matters into my own hands to improve my situation? Do I only trust my eyes that see what others do against me which can lead to anger, hurt, and hatred, which I must let out because otherwise it can hurt me? My eyes and your eyes deceive us in this spiritual warfare, like God is asking us to leap off a ledge with no guarantee something is there to catch us. He's asking me to adjust my timetable, which let's face it, I don't want to adjust. I figure if I don't do something, nothing will change.

As you go to battle with your own eyes and your own real life situations, remember God's not asking you to leap into nothing only hoping. **"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."** Promises to Abram speak of even greater promises for us. The great descendant of Abram, the one God promised, was for us. Jesus Christ took the leap into our world long before we ever could ask for help, long before we sinned even once. Christ entered the battle and took up the fight for us. He came to pay for our every sin. Yes every time you trust more what your eyes see in the dry ground rather than God who promises to always care for our physical needs. Yes every time you trust more the suffering your eyes see and doubt God rather than listen to God's promises that suffering is for your good. God stretches your faith, asking you to trust that something will happen even if you can't see it. He tells you Jesus died for every sin, including yours. He promises Jesus did what he said, that the Savior suffered death in your place, that he rose again from the dead to conquer death, and that he will return to this earth on the Last Day. These promises are what your trust rests on. Your trust rests on God not on you. We can believe God's plan.

Abram heard what God wanted him to do. Without seeing and without knowing Abram was supposed to step out and go. He went with promises and trust in God at an all time high. And the promises were repeated throughout his life. It wouldn't be surprising if we heard that Abram just stayed so he could continue to hear the promises and never actually have to go. With God though, there's a time for promises but there's also a time for putting those promises into motion. So Abram set God's plan into motion.

Abram arrived in the land of the Canaanites. It was clear this land's inhabitants weren't interested in giving land up for some foreigner who just rode into town. Abram stopped at a pretty popular spot. **"Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, To your offspring I will give this land."** Another almost unbelievable promise that God was using to extend Abram's trust. Another promise, another action of Abram. In the middle of a land that wasn't his, among people he didn't know, and among people who didn't believe what he believed, Abram stepped out in trust and took the risk. Motivated and trusting in the promises of God Abram **"built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord."** Abram proclaimed God's name and God's plan to save human beings. He preached the good news.

There's a time for hearing promises and a time for acting on those promises. Here in worship we train to step out and take the risk. We spend time with God's Word to hear God's promises. Then we put God's plan into motion. We step out into the spiritual battle and take a risk financially, giving of our precious money to offer our help to provide a place where the community can vote, where the community can play soccer on the back field, where the community knows that God loves them and we love them. We get motivated by Christ's love to want to share an invitation to Easter worship with people we know. To tell them about Jesus. To tell them about how a relationship with Jesus changes your life. God's promises encourage you in your everyday life too. You put his plan into motion when you miss sleep to care for a sick child and when you leave work early to not miss family night. Everything you do can be used to show the importance of God in your life. God's promises bring a joy beyond comparison that we can't always see now, but we can trust God's promises and plan.

It's all unseen now. The spiritual warfare still rages on. The battle between what is seen and what God asks us to trust is still great. But God gives us promises. Those promises are in Christ Jesus. We can trust in our Savior God. He's revealed his plan which we can believe in. And by the promises of God we can set that plan into motion.