

# The Fruits of Maturity in Christ

## 1) Abraham, our Father in the Faith

At the beginning of Abraham's walk with God, he was told:

Genesis 12:1-4 MKJV

(1) And the LORD said to Abram, Go out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house into a land that I will show you.

(2) And I will make you a great nation. And I will bless you and make your name great. And you shall be a blessing.

(3) And I will bless those that bless you and curse the one who curses you. And in you shall all families of the earth be blessed.

(4) And Abram departed, even as the LORD had spoken to him. And Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Shortly afterwards, he feared for his life as he was entering Egypt during a time of famine and asked his wife Sarai to lie to the Egyptians for his sake:

Genesis 12:10-13 MKJV

(10) And there was a famine in the land. And Abram went down into Egypt to stay there, for the famine was grievous in the land.

(11) And it happened, when he had come near to enter into Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that you are a beautiful woman to look upon.

(12) And it will be when the Egyptians see you, they shall say, This is his wife. And they will kill me, but they will save you alive.

(13) I pray you, say that you are my sister, so that it may be well with me for your sake. And my soul shall live because of you.

Was Abram not confident that God would keep him and His promises to him? Did Abram need to lie in order to secure God's favor and protection? His lie was exposed in the end; Pharaoh rebuked Abram for his deception and sent him on his way (Genesis 12). Still, God was with Abram, notwithstanding his weakness and fears; no harm came to him, though he had offended the very ruler of his host country.

Abraham later lied once again under similar circumstances in fear of what man might do to him (Genesis 20), and he was again found out. Abraham feared God, but he also feared man. Like water and oil, the two do not mix. But God was not finished with him.

Now I think almost any father would gladly give his own life in a heartbeat to save his son. When Abraham came to maturity, he was prepared not only to lose his life, but to obey God and sacrifice his own promised and beloved son Isaac, which he, in faith, proceeded to do:

Genesis 22:1-3 MKJV

(1) And it happened after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him,

Abraham! And he said, Behold me.

(2) And He said, Take now your son, your only one, Isaac, whom you love. And go into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will name to you.

(3) And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son. And he split the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went to the place of which God had told him.

Continuing later on (read the whole account, if you will):

Genesis 22:10-12 MKJV

(10) And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

(11) And the Angel of the LORD called to him from the heavens and said, Abraham! Abraham! And he said, Here am I.

(12) And He said, Do not lay your hand on the lad, nor do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me.

**Fruit of Faith:** From avoiding the cost to paying the price. Abraham grew from lack of faith, preserving himself at his wife Sarah's expense, to fruitious faith, prepared to obey at the greatest expense, loving God first and trusting that He could raise his beloved son Isaac back to life.

## ***2) Sarah, "Kings of people shall come from her"***

Sarah, a godly woman and obedient wife to Abraham, tried to fulfill God's promise to them by her own arrangement:

Genesis 16:1-5 MKJV

(1) Now Sarai, Abram's wife, did not bear. And she had a female slave, an Egyptian, and her name was Hagar.

(2) And Sarai said to Abram, Behold now, the LORD has kept me from bearing. I pray you, go in to my slave woman. It may be that I may be built by her. And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

(3) And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her slave woman, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife (after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan).

(4) And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

(5) And Sarai said to Abram, My wrong be upon you. I have given my slave woman into your bosom, and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between me and you.

But God, Who also "calls the things which do not exist as though they do exist" (Romans 4:17), strengthened Sarah in her faith to conceive Isaac, even "when she was past age, because she judged Him Who had promised to be faithful" (Hebrews 11:11).

Genesis 21:1-7 MKJV

(1) And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said. And the LORD did to Sarah as He had spoken.

(2) For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

(3) And Abraham called the name of his son that was born to him (whom Sarah bore to him) Isaac.

(4) And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.

(5) And Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

(6) And Sarah said, God has made me laugh, so that all who hear will laugh with me.

(7) And she said, Who could have said to Abraham, will Sarah suckle children? For I have borne a son to him in his old age.

***Fruit of Faith:*** From acting out of doubt (works of the flesh) to receiving God's promise through His gift of faith.

### ***3) Jacob, another Patriarch in the Faith***

Jacob was known to be a trickster or supplanter in his youth. He tricked his brother Esau into selling his precious birthright for a meal, and he deceived and lied to his father Isaac, stealing Esau's blessing. He then fled from his brother, fearing for his life (Genesis 27).

When God brought Jacob to maturity of faith decades later, he was prepared to obey God and face his brother:

Genesis 31:13-17 MKJV

(13) I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar, where you vowed a vow to Me. Now arise, get out from this land, and **return to the land of your kindred.**

(14) And Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?

(15) Are we not counted strangers by him? For he has sold us, and has also entirely devoured our silver.

(16) For all the riches which God has taken from our father, that is for us and for our sons. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do.

(17) Then Jacob rose up and set his sons and wives upon camels.

***Fruit of Faith:*** From fleeing to facing one's foes.

### ***4) Moses, from Lawbreaker to Lawgiver***

When Moses was forty, he did not recognize the design and sovereignty of God and took the life of an Egyptian in his effort to help his people Israel:

Exodus 2:11-15 MKJV

(11) And it happened in those days, when Moses was grown, he went out to his

brothers and looked upon their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his brothers.

(12) And he looked this way and that way, and when he did not see anyone, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

(13) And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together. And he said to the guilty one, Why do you strike your neighbor?

(14) And he said, Who made you as a man, a ruler and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known.

(15) And when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and lived in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.

For forty years, Moses lived in obscurity in the wilderness, until the day God appeared to him and commissioned him to return to the place from which he had fled. Not only did he face those who once sought his life, he now had the faith and boldness to walk into the throne room of Pharaoh and request that Pharaoh let all the Hebrew slaves go free (Exodus Chapter 3 and following):

Exodus 3:7-10 MKJV

(7) And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows.

(8) And I am coming down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, to bring them up out of that land, to a good land, a large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites and the Jebusites.

(9) And now behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me. And I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.

(10) And now go, and I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring forth My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.

Exodus 4:20 MKJV

(20) And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

Exodus 5:1 MKJV

(1) And afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.

Moses, with Aaron's help and by the faith and power of God, victoriously delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt. Where he was once rejected by his brethren and fled for his life, he now reigned over a nation of his own people, which he redeemed from those he had feared, who were more powerful than his nation.

***Fruit of Faith:*** Reigning instead of running.

## 5) Samuel, from Faith to Faith

When Samuel was but a child, he was directed of God to deliver a Word to his caretaker, the high priest of Israel. Samuel was naturally afraid, though he obeyed:

1 Samuel 3:10-18 MKJV

(10) And the LORD came and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel! Then Samuel answered, Speak, for Your servant hears.

(11) And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel at which both the ears of everyone who hears it shall tingle.

(12) In that day I will confirm to Eli all that which I have spoken as to his house, beginning and making an end.

(13) For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile and he did not restrain them.

(14) And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever.

(15) And Samuel lay until morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. **And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision.**

(16) And Eli called Samuel and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I.

(17) And he said, What is the word which He has said to you? Please do not hide it from me. God do so to you, and more also, if you hide a thing from me of all the words that He said to you.

(18) And Samuel told him all the words, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD; let Him do what seems good to Him.

Many years later, in his maturity of faith, Samuel was no longer fearful, but bold and unapologetic:

1 Samuel 15:32-33 MKJV

(32) And Samuel said, Bring here to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came to him daintily. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.

(33) And Samuel said, As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women. And Samuel cut Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

1 Samuel 16:4-5 MKJV

(4) And Samuel did what the LORD said, and came to Bethlehem. And **the elders of the town trembled at his coming** and said, Do you come peaceably?

(5) And he said, Peaceably. I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

**Fruit of Faith:** From fearing to being feared. In his maturity, it was not Samuel who was afraid, but all those who knew him and his power and position with God.

## 6) Peter, from Denial to Declaration

While still being formed as a disciple, Peter was greatly grieved at his fear and unbelief. Three times in swift order, he had denied the One he loved:

Matthew 26:69-75 MKJV

(69) And Peter sat outside in the court. And a girl came to him, saying, You also were with Jesus of Galilee.

(70) But he denied all before them, saying, I do not know what you say.

(71) And when he had gone out into the porch, another saw him and said to those there, This one was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

(72) And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

(73) And after a little while those who stood by came and said to Peter, Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you.

(74) Then he began to curse and to swear, I do not know the man. And immediately the cock crowed.

(75) And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, Who said to him, Before the cock crows, you shall deny Me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly.

Then came the day when Peter was another man, full of faith and the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ:

Acts 2:13-14 MKJV

(13) But others mocking said, These men are full of sweet wine.

(14) But Peter, **standing up with the Eleven, lifted up his voice** and said to them, Men, Jews, and all who dwell at Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to my words.

What did Peter say? He preached Jesus Christ, His death, burial, and resurrection, without mincing words with those he once feared:

Acts 2:22-24 MKJV

(22) Men, Israelites, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by powerful works, and wonders and miracles, which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know,

(23) this One given to you by the before-determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, **you have taken and by lawless hands, crucifying Him, you put Him to death;**

(24) Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

Continuing:

Acts 3:17-19 MKJV

(17) And now, brothers, I know that you did it through ignorance, as also your rulers did.

(18) But those things which God before had shown by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He fulfilled in this manner.

(19) Therefore repent and convert so that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

Then when the authorities tried to shut him up, this denier denied those he once feared, instead of denying his Lord:

Acts 4:17-20 MKJV

(17) But, so that it spread no further among the people, let us strictly threaten them, that they speak to no man in this name from now on.

(18) And they [Jewish rulers] called them [Peter and John] and commanded them not to speak at all, nor to teach in the Name of Jesus.

(19) But Peter and John answered and said to them, **Whether it is right before God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.**

(20) **For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.**

Peter continued to preach until his dying day when he submitted to that which he once feared. We are informed by tradition of history that Peter at his end was called upon by the Lord Jesus to turn back into the city he was exiting, where his enemies sought his life. He obeyed.

It is reported that when they were about to crucify him, he refused an upright execution, saying he was unworthy to be crucified as was His Master and Savior. His request was to be crucified upside down, and he was. From fear to shame, to faith, to victory, to glory.

*Fruit of Faith:* Denial of oneself instead of denial of Jesus Christ.

### ***7) Paul, from Butchery to Boldness for His Beloved***

Our brother and apostle Paul was once Saul, the rabid murderer and vehement persecutor to the death of the infant Church of God, the Body of Christ. Saul had faith, but his faith was in his interpretation of the Law of God rather than in the Giver of the Law. Hence, ironically, Saul was found to hate and persecute the Lawgiver.

There came a day, however, when the Lawgiver revealed Himself to Saul on the road to Damascus, as Saul was making his way to persecute, arrest, imprison, and execute believers. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" the Lord asked him. His life was turned around in that hour.

Soon after, Saul sought to join himself to the believers, now being a believer himself, but they were afraid of him, having known him only as their mortal enemy. It was soon known, however, that Saul was a genuinely new creature in Christ.

Still, in his spiritually immature efforts to convince the unbelieving Jews that Jesus was their Messiah, Saul (now called Paul) was causing more trouble than was good for the Church and the cause of Christ. Therefore, the saints had him taken away,

and for the next many years, we have no record of him, until the day God had finished preparing him for his calling to preach the Gospel.

Then came forth a mature man of faith, a man of God, with and by revelation, prepared to suffer things he once inflicted upon others. Whereas he once persecuted the saints for their faith in Christ, now in and by the faith of the Son of God, he would willingly be persecuted, suffering untold and severe hardships for the cause of Christ and the Gospel.

***Fruit of Faith:*** Being persecuted instead of persecuting.

### ***8) Jesus, the Son of God and Author of Faith***

When the Son of God was twelve, though He was fearless of man, He was submissive, as He needed to be:

Luke 2:41-52 MKJV

(41) And His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

(42) And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the Feast.

(43) And fulfilling the days, as they returned, the boy Jesus stayed in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know.

(44) But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey. And they looked for Him among the kinsfolk and acquaintances.

(45) And when they did not find Him, they turned back to Jerusalem, seeking Him.

(46) And it happened that after three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them and questioning them.

(47) And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.

(48) And seeing Him, they were amazed. And His mother said to Him, Child, why have you done so to us? Behold, your father and I have looked for you, greatly distressed.

(49) And He said to them, Why did you look for Me? Do you not know that I must be about My Father's business?

(50) And they did not understand the word which He spoke to them.

(51) And He went with them and came to Nazareth, and He was subject to them. But His mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

(52) And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

There came a day when Jesus in His glory could no longer do His parents' bidding. When His mother informed Him the wedding had run out of wine, Jesus said to her:

“Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4 MKJV).

Still, He proceeded to do what He thought best, which happened to be in agreement with his mother's wishes.

A time would soon come, however, when His mother's and family's priorities were not His:

Matthew 12:46-50 MKJV

(46) But while He yet talked with the people, behold, His mother and His brothers stood outside, desiring to speak with Him.

(47) Then one said to Him, Behold, Your mother and Your brothers stand outside, desiring to speak with You.

(48) And He answered and said to him who told Him, Who is My mother? And who are My brothers?

(49) And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, Behold, My mother and My brothers!

(50) For whoever shall do the will of My Father in Heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother.

Of Jesus, the Son of God, it is written, "Though being a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8 MKJV).

***Fruit of Faith:*** No longer union, but division from family by the sword. The maturity of His faith and destined purpose wrought a division between Jesus and His own flesh and blood.

These are some of the fruits of maturity in Christ, as exemplified by the Lord in His earthly life and by these precious saints, whom God called, chose, and prepared for His glory and for our sakes. Wonderful and precious is the gift of faith to those who receive and live by it. Amen!

Victor Hafichuk

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