

# The Faithful Believer Must Also Die

Genesis 25:7-10

By Pastor Don Ginkel

**L**et's pray: Our gracious and loving God, we thank You for Your Holy Word. Our thinking concerning death needs some assistance. Too often we view death as the final end. Help us move toward Your view of our impending departure from this world. Give us grace to see death, not as the end, but as the beginning of a new life with You in heaven. Grant that each of us may be touched by Your Word. We await Your guidance. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Abraham is the man of the hour. He is the great patriarch of the Old Testament. He is our father in the faith. It is to Abraham that the honor of being first in faithfulness can be given. The crown of glory is upon his head. The victor's wreath has been given him. The hallways of heaven had a glorious day when Abraham reached 175 years of age, and God called him home.

Abraham was the man whom the Lord came to one day. We read in Genesis 12:1-3, "**The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'**"

Abraham listened. He obeyed. He went. Abraham said that he would go even though he didn't know what country to go to at first. He didn't ask for the pay scale or the housing conditions. He didn't check out the climate or see what the food prices were. The Bible says that he just went. He went where God told him to go, and he remembered the promise that God had given him that he would be blessed. If God said it, then Abraham believed it. He would be faithful.

Verses 7-8 of our text says, "**Altogether, Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.**" He was faithful. He made his earthly decisions based upon what God said. When God told him to move, he didn't question why or fight it; he moved. "**He was gathered to his people**" means that he joined other faithful believers in heaven. In Revelation 2:10 Jesus promises His children, "**Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.**"

Yes, the faithful believer must die — there is no getting around it. Is there any way to get to heaven without passing through death? Not unless your name is Elijah or unless the Lord returns in the sky while you are still alive on earth. To get to heaven we must enter through the door of death. But what a joy it will be when we pass through the door and meet Jesus.

What a joy even now to know that even though we have sinned, God has made us into His saints through the blood of Jesus and has kept us faithful to this very day. Isn't that a fabulous miracle?

What is the secret to the committed life and to being faithful to the Lord? Four points:

1. We are going to go to heaven with father Abraham because God promises in Romans 8:38-39a) that nothing. “. . . neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, not anything else . . .” will stand in the way of it.
2. We are going to heaven because our merciful God decided to sacrifice His Son so that our shameful sins could be paid for.
3. We are going to heaven because God has had mercy on us in spite of our sins.
4. We are going to heaven because Jesus has made us into the most important people on the face of the earth. He has made us children of God!

We cannot understand the miracle that has happened to us. We are like the blind man who had his sight restored. The enemies of Jesus tried to get the man to explain to their satisfaction what really happened. They said to him in John 9:24-25, “**Give glory** to God . . . We know this man (Jesus) **is a sinner.**’ He replied, ‘**Whether He is a sinner or not, I don’t know.** **One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see.**”

Now we confess, “**Amazing grace! How sweet the sound** — That saved a wretch like me! I once was **lost but now am found, Was blind but now I see.**” We, too, have been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. We were blind, but now we see. We, too, can be faithful.

Abraham was faithful, and he was taken to heaven. The faithful must also die, but what a joy when God receives them. What a tribute to the living, saving God when the funeral sermon of a faithful one is preached. The greatest experience of a pastor is to stand before people on the day of a funeral proclaiming the Good News that God has called another saint, a faithful person, a person who followed through on the faith that God gave him.

Oh, my friend, God is getting closer and closer to calling each of us who are faithful home to Himself. It won’t be **too long** from now, and it won’t be bad, and it won’t hurt, and it won’t be hopeless because the faithful are in the center of God’s Kingdom, and they are going home to heaven. In 2 Corinthians 5:8 Paul says, “**We are confident, I say, and would prefer to** be away from the body and at home with the **Lord.**” Before my Dad died he said, “I want to go home.” Before my Mom died she said, “I want to go home.” I want to go home. I hope that you do, too.

Why was Abraham faithful? Did he have some special ability that he inherited from his father that made him particularly faithful? **God makes people faithful.** We don’t have a faithful bone in our bodies when we are born, but God makes people faithful.

When a person meets Jesus as his Savior, confesses his sins before Him, and believes that Jesus has the authority to take the sin away, then that person begins his journey of faithfulness. Now this faithfulness is often interrupted with sin, with complaining, with forgetting who we are. But our faithful God restores even those who wander away. He brings them back. He presses them to His bosom. He nurtures them and builds them up in faithfulness again and again. He is doing that this very morning.

Abraham lived a full life, the Bible says, and then he died. Faithful people always live full lives no matter how old they are when they die. All of God's desires and expectations for Abraham were satisfied. Everything that he needed was provided.

God blesses His faithful ones in the same way today. Life is never incomplete for the faithful Christian. We don't need answers to everything to remain faithful; we just need direction and power from God. God is willing to give direction every step of the way as we go through life with the brilliant light of His holy Word. He is guiding us in this hour of worship. He guides us through His Word at home. Faithful people must die, but they die full of direction from God. Everything has been taken care of by God.

I like the allegory Bible commentator R. C. Lenski uses on the subject of this certainty. Remember that this is an allegory. Listen to what he says:

The things not seen shall presently turn to the things seen. This must come, otherwise faith would trust in something that does not exist; it would be like the faith of the worldling who trusts in something that does not exist and that he will, therefore, never see. He is like the man who thinks that he has a million dollars in the bank, who goes on in this fatuous faith, and who, when he at last tries to draw out his million, finds that he never had a million, finds that he owes a million and cannot pay. We trust that our bank has a million dollars that was deposited for us by Christ; He has, indeed deposited them for us, and when at death we come to draw them out, they will be handed out to us, we shall get sight of every penny of them, shall have them in our hands forever (2 Corinthians, p. 1011).

Abraham died peacefully at the age of 175 years. Faithful people always die peacefully. Don't fear old age. There is no need to worry about being old or about being alone. You don't have to dread getting old. Even getting old for the faithful is a peaceful process, a joyful process, a process that you can look forward to.

I hear some people say, "**I dread getting old.**" My friends, why should you dread where you are going? You are going to Abraham's bosom, to heaven itself. Yes, you must die, but you don't have to be fearful and you don't have to fight it. Jesus gave His life so that you could not only live right but also die right. Jesus walked out of the grave so that you don't have to be afraid.

What, precisely, will happen when you die? The Bible says Abraham died and went to be with his people. This is an Old Testament expression for heaven. When a faithful person dies he immediately goes to heaven. He doesn't float around for a while in the cemetery or in the sky. The Apostle Paul says in Philippians 1:23, "**I desire to depart and be with Christ.**" He didn't say, "**I have a desire to float around in the cemetery or to be reincarnated as a toad.**"

In Luke 23 we read: "**Then the criminal said. 'Jesus, remember me when You come into your Kingdom.'** Jesus answered him, '**Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise.**' Dying is the separation of your soul from your body. Your soul, the real you, goes immediately to heaven; your flesh goes back to dust. You go immediately to be with your

Savior and all the faithful in heaven; your body comes to the church for a service of rejoicing with God's people over the victory.

Abraham, the faithful man, died and went to be with his people. When you die you, too, being faithful to the end, will go to be with all faithful people of the past.

Just be faithful. I want you to hear these words from Jesus someday, Matthew 25:23, "**Well** done, good and faithful servant... Come and share your **Master's happiness!**" To that end let us all be faithful to our Lord and Savior and to our God and Father in heaven as Abraham was. **Be in worship every Lord's Day. Be in your Bible every day.** The victory is ours! The victory is yours! Amen!