

The Faith of Abraham

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.

September 11, 2022

Text: Hebrews 11:8-16

Purpose: We are called to walk by faith. Abraham trusted God's promise even though it never was realized in the lifetime of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. Abraham's promise was to be eternally in the city of God.

I love a good fishing story.

This old fisherman would go out in his boat every morning and come back about an hour later with a cooler filled with fish. The game warden got suspicious as to how the old guy always caught so many fish in such a short time. So, he invited himself fishing with the old guy.



They went to the middle of the lake; the old guy pulls out a stick of dynamite and throws it overboard. Boom! Fish start floating to the surface and the old guy starts scooping them up in his net.

The game warden says, "You can't do that. It's illegal."

The old guy quietly lights another stick of dynamite, hands it to the game warden and says, "You gonna talk or are you gonna fish?"¹

I am going to hand you a stick of dynamite and if you would be willing to light it, then you will reap a great reward. God's word has been described as dynamite and the verse I want to hand you this morning is this, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." (Hebrews 11:6)

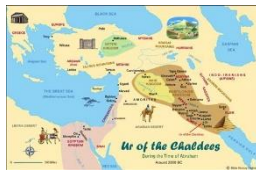


We have been exploring the various individuals that made it into God's Faith Hall of Fame. We have looked at Abel, who brought the better sacrifice. We have also looked at Enoch who walked with God by faith and then was no more, because God took Enoch to be with Him without going through the doorway of death. Last week we looked at Noah, who by faith built an ark to save himself and his family from the judgment of the flood.

Today we come to the man of faith that stands out loudly in the Old Testament as the man upon whom the three different major religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) consider the father of their faith. That man is Abraham.



Abraham's story is given to us in Genesis chapters 12-25. His faith and life are illustrated over and over again in the bible.

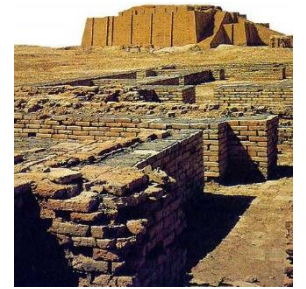


You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him out of the Ur of Chaldeans and named him Abraham. You found his heart faithful to you ... (Nehemiah 9:7-8)

Consider Abraham: 'He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Understand, then, that those who believe are the children of Abraham. (Galatians 3:6-7 and Hebrews 2:16)

James called Abraham "God's friend." (James 2:23)

The story of Abraham takes us back to 2000 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. He was a citizen of the city of Ur which is located on the Euphrates River which is located today in southern Iraq. I am sure during Abraham's day, there would have been a large Ziggurat built by Ur-Nammu. It was a three staged building that begins like a pyramid at the bottom but is flat at the top. This was the place where the sun god Nammu was worshiped and where possible human sacrifices were presented to this god. I am sure Abram was a man just like any other man in that area, except he was chosen by God to leave that pagan society and trust God with an unseen future.

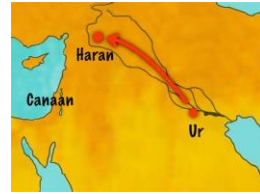


Faith is described in Hebrews 11:1 as this, "Now faith is being sure of what we hoped for." Abraham had heard the Lord and was certain that what God promised would come to pass. This promise was so powerful and certain in Abraham's heart, that at the age of 75 he moved away from his family and began a journey of faith.

In Genesis 12:1-3 we read this conversation God had with Abram.

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. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you. I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

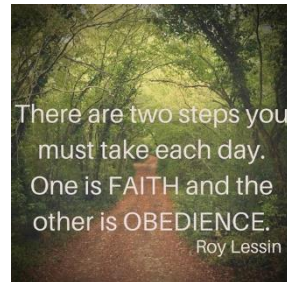


The instructions and promise Abram received from God were clear and distinct. Up to this point, Abram and Sarai were childless. In spite of the fact Abram was 75 years old and Sarai was 65, God told Abram that he would become a great nation. In order for that to happen, he was to leave his father’s house and trust God with the journey to a place that was yet undisclosed to Abram. This new vision for a new life with God compelled Abram forward by faith.

FAITH AND THE PROMISED LAND (v. 8-10)

Inwardly Abram knew the promises were true, but it required an outward obedience to what God taught. Verse 8 in Hebrews says, “By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.”

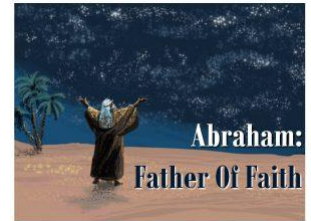
Abraham’s believing life began with an immediate act of obedience. Every step in Abraham’s journey with God required repeated commitments to God as they waited for the hoped for promises of God. The connection between



faith and obedience are inseparable. Because Abraham totally trusted God, he became obedient to the clear instructions of God. If Abraham did not trust God, he would not have forsaken all he knew and headed out in a direction that God would lead him.

Martin Luther had this to say about Abraham’s faith:

It was hard to leave his native land, which is natural for us to love. Indeed, love for the fatherland is numbered among the greatest virtues of the heathen. Furthermore, it is hard to leave friends and their companionship. but most of all to leave relatives ... and then it is clear that with his obedience of faith Abraham gave a supreme example of an evangelical life, because he left everything and followed the Lord. Preferring the Word of God to everything and loving it above everything.



True faith responds by obedience. Has God called you to a specific task or action and you are wavering in your obedience to do it? If so, where is your faith? **Partial obedience is no obedience. It is disobedience.**

Partial obedience = complete disobedience

Abraham’s faith was one that called him to trust God, even if he did not realize the promise in his lifetime. Hebrews 11:9 says, Abraham “dwelt in the land of promise in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.”

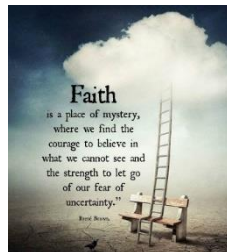


Acts 7:5 describes the situation of Abraham as having “*no inheritance and not even enough ground to place his foot.*” But the promise that was given to Abraham was transferred to Isaac and then to Jacob and then to his twelve sons. The only land Abraham ever owned was the cave that he purchased in order to bury his wife Sarah.

Imagine you got a clear calling from God to leave your home here in Kinston to go and live in Mexico. Imagine getting that message at 75 years old. Caught up in that promise to move to Mexico was a large family and land as an inheritance. But when you get there, you have to live in a tent.

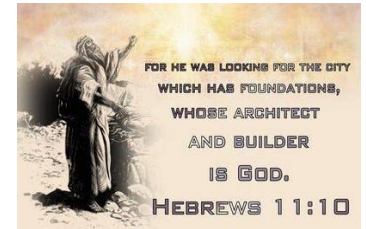
That is exactly what happened to Abraham. He was a foreigner in a foreign land. He lived out of pace with the rest of the people around him. They were pagans and idol worshippers. Abraham worshipped the creator of the world while his neighbors’ worshipped gods fashioned by their own hands. They did not have a relationship with the One True Living God. Abraham could live as an outsider because his relationship was with God and Abraham held on to the promises given – even if they were not realized in his lifetime.

We can learn from Abraham in his journey of faith with God. We need to recognize ***the life of faith that we live is not tied to where we are today – rather it is anchored in the future hope and future home with God.*** We are only here temporarily. This place is not our home. God has prepared us a place and we need to recognize we are only passing through.



Have you stepped out in obedience to your individual call of God on your life? Or are you hunkering down into a comfortable pattern and making this world your home? We do need a sense of disconnect from the world. We need to keep our eyes fixed upon our final destination.

Hebrews 11:10 says, “*For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*” WE need to keep looking forward to the place God has prepared for us – not the one we have built here on earth. Jesus said, “*In my Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and received you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*” (John 14:2-3)



That was Abraham’s promise and it is our promise also!

Over the years, I have spoken to many people that have had loved ones die. With many of those people I look back on and think about what Paul said to Timothy.

“*I have fought a good fight, finished the race, kept the faith, and there was a crown of righteousness laid up for them.*” One day, we too will have finished our race. Let us keep our eyes fixed and focused on the prize of the upward calling of Christ Jesus.



Abraham understood his home was not here. It was in a city not made with hands, but made by God Himself.

FAITH AND THE PROMISED SON (v. 11-12)

God promised an inheritance of land and he promised him a son.

Hebrews 11:11-12 says, *“By faith Abraham, even though he was past age – and Sarah herself was barren – was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.”*

As you read the story of Abraham, you discover that Abraham thought this promise of a child or great nation was not going to materialize. At first Abraham thought the promise of God would come about through his servant Eliezer (Genesis 15:2). But God this would be accomplished through Abraham’s body, not Eliezer. Later Abraham though this promise would be fulfilled through Sarah’s handmaid, Hagar. Through that relationship with Hagar, a son Ishmael was born. But God said that was not the child of promise.



At the age of 99, Abraham was promised a son. This son was to be born to his wife, Sarah, who was 90 years old. No wonder Sarah laughed when she first heard the news about her giving birth to a child! Who has children at the age of 90? Hebrews said that this one man was as good as dead! ***But when God promises a thing, nothing is dead!*** Abraham knew this about God and by faith believed God even though it seemed impossible.



Maybe you have seen an impossible situation turned around completely and the only way it can be explained is that God is still in the miracle working business. There are times when I go and visit someone that their situation seems desperate. I pray asking God to intervene in this situation and leave the results up to God. At times it appears if God doesn’t intervene, that the results will be tragic – but I still pray in faith that God will answer. I believe we are called to live our faith out daily with God. Trusting, praying, that God will work all things for good for those that love Him and are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

How was Abraham able to overcome this insurmountable age issue: he continued to trust God! In other words, Abraham believed *“God is, and is the rewarder of those that diligently seek him.”* (11:6) Abraham was certain and unshakable in his faith in God. He was optimistic!

George Sweeting, one of the past presidents of the Moody Bible Institute once gave this definition of optimism.

“Optimism is when an 85-year-old man marries a 35-year-old woman and moves into a 12-room house next to an elementary school!” Abraham’s optimism tops that! He trusted God to fulfill the promise that his lineage would be *“as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.”*



We need to study and know what God’s word says to us and how we are to live. There are literally hundreds of promises in the Bible waiting for you to claim for yourself. We need to learn to take God at His word and live our lives by faith and not through the lens of skepticism and cynicism.

FAITHFUL TO THE END (v. 13-16)

Hebrews 11:13-16 makes a powerful statement about those that remain faithful to the end. It says, *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”*

If you consider death as our last test of faith, then you could say that Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob died making all “A’s.” Or if you were scoring them in the Olympics, they would have made a perfect 10.0. If you added the difficulty scale of 10.0, then would have to award them a perfect 20.0, and the gold medal!

They completed their race to the end and never saw all the promises of God fulfilled. Jacob got a closer glimpse of how God would fulfill his promises, but Abraham and Isaac, completed their life knowing their reward was with God.

They completed this journey with this thought in mind, *“We are only strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”* They were aliens in a foreign land.

There is an old country song sung by Jim Reeves, [This World Is Not My Home](#). The words go like this:



This world is not my home, I'm just passing through
My treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue
The angels beckon me, from heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home, in this world anymore.

CHORUS

O Lord you know, I have no friend like you.
If heaven's is not my home, then Lord what will I do
The angels beckon me, from heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home, in this world anymore.
Abraham saw his reward and did not long for the past home
places of Haran, instead his focus was on the city made by
God. We are called to live out our faith and keep our eyes
focused on God and His call upon our life.

Verses 14 and 15 would indicate that Abraham, Isaac, as well as Jacob, were willing to stay where God called them. If they didn't want to stay, they surely could have returned back to Abraham's father's home. Instead, they were not ashamed to call upon God as their hope and they waited for the fulfillment. They longed for a better land with a better promise. They based it upon the character of the one that made these promises.

Philippians 3:20 says, *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”* Those that are in Christ are a part of a heavenly citizenship and fellow believers are fellow citizens of that kingdom. We need to get our allegiance focused upon God and God alone.



Colossians 3:1-4 reminds us of this reality:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in Glory.

We will appear WITH Him in Glory! That is news worth looking forward to. “This world is not my home; I’m just passing through.”

This kind of faith reaps a great reward from God. Hebrews 11:16 tell us that ***when we trust Him by faith, then He is not ashamed of us or ashamed of being called our God.*** Abraham took God at His word and was obedient. The reward was eternal.



Through out the Bible, it is said that God was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There is no higher praise than this – to be called a representative of God. How are you doing in your faith walk? Are you walking with God daily – trusting Him with your todays and tomorrows? How are you doing in the area of obedience? Are you attending, tithing, and sharing your faith like you ought to? If God were to make a declaration about you – and He will one day – would he be able to say “I am the God of _____!” Will God be able to say that about me? “I am the God of Pastor Dew.”

Often, we get caught up in the applause of men and seek the approval of society. At the turn of the twentieth century, missionary Henry C. Morrison was returning home to New York after serving for forty years in Africa. On that same ship was President Theodore Roosevelt. As they entered the New York harbor, the president was greeted with great fanfare. Morrison felt dejected. He had spent four decades in the Lord’s service. It was then he heard a small voice come to him, “Henry ... you are not home yet.”



That is true. Our home is not here. Our applause is reserved for us in heaven. God has prepared a place for those that love Him and are willing to obey and serve Him. One day the Lord will say to His servants, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”



Well done, good and faithful servant.

By faith it is possible to please God!

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Mikey’s Funnies, June 27, 2008 – A Fishing Funny

