

## The Faith of Abraham

(Hebrews 11:8-22)

### INTRODUCTION:

1. This is the first of two or three lessons, with one to follow each month, Lord willing, designed to lead us into our VBS in June. The topic for this year's VBS will be "By Faith Joseph..."
2. Because Abraham is described as the "father of the faithful" (Rom. 4:16) and was the great grandfather of Joseph, I want to begin with him and the life of faith he lived.
  - A. Although Abraham, then Abram, is mentioned in Genesis 11, the main part of his story begins in Gen. 12:1-3 with the promises God made to him that had world-changing implication.
    - i. Gen. 12:1 God promised to **show him a land**, which we know was Canaan, the Land of Promise, **that God would give to Abraham's descendants** (12:7).
    - ii. In 12:2 God promised to make Abraham a **great nation**.
    - iii. In 12:3 God promised that through Abraham He would **bleed all the families of the earth**.
  - B. That Abraham's faith in God caused him to obey time and again, despite the doubts that could have easily derailed him, shows why God approved of Him.
    - i. For, as Hebrews 11:1-2 says, "faith is the **assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**" <sup>2</sup> For **by it the men of old gained approval.**"
    - ii. For, Abraham believed God and faithfully obeyed Him though he had not seen the things God promised, nor did he see the fullness of them during his lifetime.
3. With these things in mind, I would like to look at three points of Abraham's faith, or trust, in God in hopes of laying the foundation for what true faith is and how it must affect God's people. These points are how Abraham trusted God to...
  - A. Give him a home.
  - B. Give him a family.
  - C. Give him life.

### BODY:

#### **I. Abraham trusted God to give him a home (Gen. 12:1; Heb. 11:8-10).**

- A. When God appeared to Abraham, the first words recorded are God telling him to give up his home and leave his extended family (Gen. 12:1 – "Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you").
  1. Have you thought about how strange and frightening it would be to just pack up and leave your home without even the knowledge of where you and your family were going?
    - a. I know we may feel we have it hard at times as Christians, and I guess we do, but leaving his home was the prerequisite for Abraham's relationship with God.
    - b. His journey of faith was to begin with obedience that expressed **absolute trust** in God to care for and direct his life and that of his family.
  2. Though he was an aged man, Abraham **obeyed** (Gen. 12:4 – "So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was **seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.**").
    - a. So, God asked Abraham to embrace significant change in his life at a time when change is not easily embraced! That is what happens as you get older! You do not like change!
    - b. But faith in God **required** that Abraham go (Heb. 11:8 – "**By faith** Abraham, when he was called, **obeyed by going out** to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.").
    - c. And though Abraham's bold move clearly showed his faith here at this older age, this would not be the last time God would require him to do so.
- B. Abraham's faith in God required him to live as a foreigner and a wanderer (Heb. 11:9-10 – "**By faith** he lived as an **alien** in the land of promise, **as in a foreign land**, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; <sup>10</sup> **for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.**").

1. Abraham lived a difficult life.
  - a. I know people sell their homes today to live the “RV life”; but there were no RVs, no trucks to pull them, no campgrounds, no stores to purchase food, clothing, etc.
  - b. Abraham left home with the people he had and what they and their livestock could carry (Gen. 12:5 – “Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.”).
  - c. You could compare it today, in a sense, to one choosing to leave home and live completely off the land and off the grid with no car, no house, no electricity, no hot or cold running water, no internet, no phone, etc., etc.!
2. Abraham was able to do this because he trusted God to give him a home (Heb. 11:10 – “for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”).
  - a. Though he would never again claim a piece of land to be his home, he could do so because Abraham’s **real home would be provided by God in heaven.**
3. God expects no less from us.
  - a. We like Abraham must live in this world as aliens/strangers, wanderers without the connection to this world that our friends and neighbors hold to so tightly.
    - i. 1 Pet. 2:11 – “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to **abstain from fleshly lusts** which wage war against the soul.”
    - ii. Phil. 3:20 – “For **our citizenship is in heaven**, from which also **we eagerly wait for a Savior**, the Lord Jesus Christ”
  - b. We like Abraham must live with the knowledge that **we depend on God completely.**
    - i. For our prayers are to include “**Give** us this **day** our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11).
    - ii. We must know that we owe every good thing we receive in life to God’s hand (Jas. 1:17 – “Every good thing given and every perfect gift **is from above**, coming down **from the Father of lights**, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow”).
  - c. So, like Abraham we too must endure our wanderings here on this earth with confidence in God to fulfill His promises (Heb. 10:35-36 – “Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. <sup>36</sup> For you have need of **endurance**, so that **after you have done the will of God**, you may **receive the promise.**”).

## II. Abraham trusted God to give him a family (Gen. 12:2; Heb. 11:11-12).

- A. God promised to make Abraham a **great nation** (Gen. 12:2 – “And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing”).
  1. To become a great nation required that Abraham’s family grow exponentially, which was what God promised him (Gen. 15:5 – “And He [God] took him [Abraham] outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”).
  2. The problem, however, was that Abraham **had no children.**
    - a. One of the first things we learn about Sarai is that she was barren (Gen. 11:30).
    - b. And after God made this “nation” promise and Abraham left Haran to follow Him, this problem persisted (Gen. 15:1-3 – “After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.” <sup>2</sup> Abram said, “O Lord God, what will You give me, **since I am childless**, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” <sup>3</sup> And Abram said, “**Since You have given no offspring to me**, one born in my house is my heir.”).
    - c. Though Abraham trusted God and served Him, God’s workings did not automatically become clear or happen in the timeframe he expected.
      - i. But it is important to point out that God did not rebuke Abraham or demean his faith when Abraham was honest in expressing his questions and confusion.
      - ii. That should encourage us to be open with God concerning our questions and confusion, seeing it will strengthen, not hinder, our relationship with God.

- B. Despite being old, Abraham believed God (Gen. 15:4-6 – “Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “This man [Eliezer] will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.”<sup>5</sup> And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”<sup>6</sup> Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”).
1. Abraham shows us that real faith trust God and His promises even though they may seem impossible compared to the “facts” we may have come to accept about our lives.
    - a. Both Abraham and Sarai were old and beyond all earthly hope of having a child.
    - b. So, faith in God meant trusting that He is not limited by the “facts” as we perceive them.
  2. Abraham shows us that real faith trusts God and His promises even when fulfillment is “delayed” (Gen. 17:1-5 – “Now when Abram was **ninety-nine years old**, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless.<sup>2</sup> “I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and **I will multiply you exceedingly.**”<sup>3</sup> Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying,<sup>4</sup> “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and **you will be the father of a multitude of nations.**”<sup>5</sup> “No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be **Abraham**; for I have made you the **father of a multitude of nations.**”).
    - a. When God appeared to Abraham he was now **99 years old**. It had been **24 years** since the promise, and around **14 years** since God had reassured Abraham of that promise... without fulfillment.
    - b. I do not know what you think about this, but that was a lot of years to wait, and grow much, much older, without losing faith that God was going to give him a son.
  3. Abraham shows us that faith in God is **accounted as righteousness** and **rewarded** (15:6).
    - a. In other words, God **justified** Abraham because He trusted and obeyed despite how all that Abraham observed around him said the very opposite.
    - b. And God **rewarded** Abraham’s faith.
      - i. God gave him a son, whom they named Isaac, or laughter (Gen. 21:1-7 – “Then the LORD took note of Sarah **as He had said**, and the LORD did for Sarah **as He had promised.**”<sup>2</sup> **So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age**, at the **appointed time of which God had spoken to him.**”<sup>3</sup> Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.<sup>4</sup> Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.<sup>5</sup> Now Abraham was **one hundred years old** when his son Isaac was born to him.<sup>6</sup> Sarah said, “God has made **laughter** for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.”<sup>7</sup> And she said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”).
      - ii. By faith Abraham, and Sarah, received a family from God (Heb. 11:11-12 – “**By faith** even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.<sup>12</sup> Therefore there was born even of one man, and him **as good as dead** at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.”).
- C. God expects no less of us today.
1. For, we too must be willing to forsake all, including our family, and follow Jesus (Mt. 10:34-39 – “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.<sup>35</sup> For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;<sup>36</sup> and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household.<sup>37</sup> “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.<sup>38</sup> And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.<sup>39</sup> He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.”).

2. So we obey, like Abraham, with confidence in the Lord to provide us a family (Mark 10:29-30 – “Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake,<sup>30</sup> but that he **will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age**, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, **along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.”**”).

### III. Abraham trusted God to give him life.

- A. After God gave Abraham a son in his very old age, God then required that Abraham sacrifice him on an altar (Gen. 22:1-2 – “Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”<sup>2</sup> He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.”).
  1. This test, or command, would naturally have appeared to be contrary to God’s previous promise to **make Abraham a great nation through Isaac**.
  2. But the terms of this test were non-negotiable.
    - a. God had a plan and Abraham’s part in it at this point, no matter how difficult it would have been, was to offer Isaac.
    - b. Those of faith understand that God’s plan continues to be non-negotiable, even when it means that we suffer pain or even death for Him (Rev. 2:10-11 – “Do not fear what you are about to **suffer**. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. **Be faithful until death**, and I will **give you the crown of life**.”<sup>11</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who **overcomes will not be hurt by the second death**.””).
- B. The faith of Abraham meant, as it always had, that he **obeyed** (Gen. 22:3-4, 9-12 – “So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.<sup>4</sup> On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance ...<sup>9</sup> Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.<sup>10</sup> Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.<sup>11</sup> But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”<sup>12</sup> He said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”).
  1. So, the same faith required of Abraham to receive Isaac from God required that Abraham give Isaac up, or sacrifice him, to God.
    - a. God was asking Abraham to make a **real sacrifice**, requiring that Abraham **take a knife with the intent to kill Isaac and burn him up** on an altar.
      - i. It would not matter how you spun this, there would be no easy way to do it.
      - ii. For, Abraham loved him and I have no doubt his life was wrapped up in that boy!
    - b. So, again, Abraham life shows us that the faith God requires is **obedient faith**.
      - i. We know this because **after** Abraham’s attempt offer Isaac God said, “...**for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me**” (Gen. 22:12).
      - ii. So, obedience was required to show Abrahams’ true faith in God!
    - c. **Side note:** Parents, if we are going to raise children to have the faith of Abraham, you are going to have to give them up to God as well!
      - i. Their lives, which include their schooling, sports, etc., will all have to be sacrificed on the altar of putting God first.
      - ii. I am not saying that children cannot be raised in godliness and still do these, but I am saying that these things must always be sacrificed when they conflict with God’s will.
      - iii. I know from personal experience that doing this is hard...but so was sacrificing Isaac!

2. Abraham could make this sacrifice because he trusted God to give him life (Heb. 11:17-19 – **“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; <sup>18</sup> it was he to whom it was said, “In Isaac your descendants shall be called.” <sup>19</sup> He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.”**).
  - a. His faith meant he trusted that God would be true to his promises, even if it required raising Isaac from the dead.
  - b. In a figurative sense, Abraham received Isaac back from the dead, resurrected to life if you will.
  - c. For, instead of Isaac God provided his own sacrifice for Abraham (Gen. 22:13-14 – **“Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. <sup>14</sup> Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, “In the mount of the LORD it will be provided.”**”).
3. God expects no less from us, from you and me, today.
  - a. For, God has again provided His own sacrifice in Christ that we might live (1 Thess. 5:9-10 – **“For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining **salvation** through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.”**”).
  - b. We must be willing to sacrifice all to receive that life (Phil. 3:7-11 – **“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the **surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, <sup>9</sup> and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, <sup>10</sup> that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; <sup>11</sup> in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”**”).**

#### CONCLUSION:

1. As we conclude I want to call your attention to a very important verse to remember (Heb. 11:13-16 – **“All these **died in faith, without receiving the promises**, but having seen them and having **welcomed them from a distance**, and having confessed that they were **strangers and exiles on the earth.** <sup>14</sup> For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. <sup>15</sup> And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> But as it is, **they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.**”).**
2. Will you, like Abraham, choose to trust God to give you a home, a family, and to give you life?
  - A. If you will He will not be ashamed to be your God and there are wonderful promises from God awaiting you.
  - B. If you will come to Christ today in F-R-C-Bp, God’s promises of forgiveness, peace, and the hope of eternal life are yours to receive and enjoy.
  - C. Will you come to Jesus today?