

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Turn your bibles with me to Hebrews 11

We are continuing our study through the book of Hebrews

This letter that was written to Jewish believers – who had a good start in their walk with the Lord – but because of persecution and discouragement – they were seriously contemplating returning to Judaism.

This group of Jewish believers were wavering in their faith

They were beginning to have doubts about whether they were better off following a list of do's and don'ts and bringing sacrifices to the temple than simply abiding in Jesus Christ and walking by faith.

So, the writer of Hebrews writes this letter to them telling them to endure

And the way they were going to endure was by faith –

He provided them and us a description of what faith looks like

**[Heb 11:1 NKJV] 1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**

And then – he began to provide them with examples of men and women who were able to endure despite the obstacles, they were able to please God as they worshipped God on His terms, they were able to walk with God and work for God during times when the world wanted nothing to do with God

We have seen this in our last two studies as we looked at the lives of Enoch and Noah –

Who were able endure – not by their own strength, not by their own might, not because they simply tried harder – but, by faith

So this evening, we are going to begin to look at the next examples that the writer of Hebrews gives this group of Jewish believers and us – and that is the lives of Abraham and Sarah

Where - we are going to be introduced into a new facet of faith

Let's pray...

So quick recap – for those that haven't been here the last few studies

By faith, Abel worshipped / or we could say that Abel had devotion with God because he approached God on God's terms

By faith, Enoch walked with God – he had fellowship with God, his walk was about companionship with God, he made God’s priorities, his priorities, he took the path that God set for him and he didn’t run ahead of God

And then last week, by faith Noah listened and acted upon God’s word – he built the ark – his actions were a living testimony to what God was about to do

So we have three different facets to their faith

**[Heb 11:8-12 NKJV] 8 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.**

Now, before we look at God’s calling to Abraham –

I had you make a note of the word “knowing”

Because the word that is used here is actually made up of two words – (upon and stand) – it means to be versed in, to fully understand

In other words – Abraham didn’t understand where God was calling him to go, he didn’t understand what the land looked like, he didn’t understand what the weather was like, he didn’t understand how far it was –

He had nothing to stand on

The word that is used for knowing actually mirrors the word that the writer of Hebrew uses in verse 1 when he uses the word “substance”

In verse 1 – faith is the foundation – faith is the substance that we stand upon.

Abraham had nothing to stand on when it came to where God called him

Abraham didn’t “understand” where he was going.

He didn’t know what he was getting into.

He wasn’t “well-versed” in the geography of the place.

But he went anyway because God called him to go.

Turn your bibles with me to Genesis 12 -

**[Gen 12:1-3 NKJV] 1 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. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."**

Did you see how time and time again – in God’s promise to Abram – God uses the word bless

I had you make a note of the phrase – “I will bless you”

Because what God is promising Abram and reminding Abram over and over again is that He will empower Abram or give Abram the ability/ the enabling to do what God called him to do.

God gives 7 promises to Abraham in this calling

1. **I will make you a great nation** – and we see this later in the Genesis as Abraham becomes a father to Isaac and Isaac becomes a father to Jacob and Jacob has 12 sons and they continue to multiply and by the end of Genesis – there are 70 and those 70 go into Egypt and after 400 years – they became 2-3 million and God delivers them out of slavery and leads them into the Promised Land where they become a great nation – (Promise made – Promise kept)
2. **I will bless you** – in what sense? I will empower you – again, in what sense? That you will be able to accomplish everything that I have planned for you – btw, this becomes an important principle in our lives and our walk in Christ, because the truth is that where God leads, God provides
3. **I will make your name great** – three religions name Abraham as their father, his name is found in almost half the books of the bible – 27 out of the 66 books in the bible refer to Abraham
4. **You will be a blessing** – not only would God bless Abraham – but Abraham, himself, would be a blessing to those around him

5. **I will bless them that bless you** – everyone who identified with Abraham and embraced the message of Abraham would be blessed. You see, the way the nations treated Abraham and his descendants, that would reveal to God whether they would follow God or oppose God. The nations that wanted to have a relationship with God would show favor to Abraham and his descendants
6. **I will curse them that curse you** – what better example of this do we find in scriptures than the book of Esther. We find Haman who takes it upon himself to eliminate the Jews. Was Haman successful in his attempt? No. What happened to Haman? He was hanged on the same gallows that he was planning to hang Mordecai on.
7. **And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed** – church, this is a reference to Jesus. It is a reference to the reality that a real person is going to come into the world, that He is going to be born of a virgin, that He is going to live the perfect life that we could never live, that He is going to die on a cross and He would raise from the dead and bring redemption to those who put their faith and trust in Him

But notice a few things about Abraham's faith

His faith begins with God's call

He was called by God and then challenged by God - to be a witness to a watching world.

Sound familiar –

Just like you and me.

God's calling upon our own lives occurred when we responded to the Holy Spirit's knocking on our hearts when we heard the gospel

And then we are challenged to go out and be a witness to a watching world.

God chose Abraham – by grace

The Bible nowhere says that prior to God's call Abraham was righteous or that he sought God.

On the contrary, we read that his background was idolatry

In Joshua 24 – (mark this down)

Joshua tells us as he is speaking to the Children of Israel -

**[Jos 24:2-3 NKJV] 2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Your fathers, [including] Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. 3 'Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.**

God had to get Abraham away from all the god substitutes – all the pagan idols

God called Him in grace - Abraham responded in faith.

In last week study we saw how God responded to man's wickedness – He responded with judgment – He responded with the flood

And prior to God reaching out to Abraham – the same thing was happening over again – the tower of Babel – people began their rebellion against God.

But this time, God deals with it by injecting grace to one man – and from that man, spreading it to many.

**[Gen 12:4 NKJV] 4 So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram [was] seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.**

God told Abram to get out of your country, your family and your father's house –

And we see Lot tagging along –

So we have an example of Abraham's growing yet imperfect faith

Don't miss the point that the writer of Hebrews is saying –

By faith Abraham obeyed God

He didn't obey God because he had to or because he was forced to

The text doesn't say, "By careful persuasion or by the twisting of his arm – Abraham obeyed God"

By faith Abraham obeyed God

What kind of faith did Abraham possess?

The kind of faith that believes God

The kind of faith that believes what God says is true

The kind of faith where you don't know the answer to every question

And now we see that he had a faith that resulted in him obeying God

Back in Hebrews -

**9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as [in] a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker [is] God.**

By faith Abraham believes, he obeys and he goes into the land of promise

But notice, he goes into the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents

Why didn't Abraham build a nice home when he got to Canaan

Why didn't he build a nice mansion surrounded by a city???

Why live in the land like if he was a foreigner?

Because – by faith, he knew that the promised land, as wonderful as it was – and as important as it was – it was only a temporary stop.

He knew that it was a picture of a more permanent land -an eternal land.

Abraham knew that the Promised Land was temporary

Abraham never built a city

He lived as he was passing through

He was looking forward to something better

And it is the same for us as believers –

Abraham models for us – how we are to live in this world –

We are to live as strangers – we are just passing through

Here in verse 10 – I had you make a note of the word “waited”

And the reason is that Abraham didn’t simply live by faith – he also looks by faith into the future

He waited –

The word that is used here means “to expect eagerly”

He was looking forward to heaven

Abraham was simply concerned with the now – he looked forward to the future

Think about how this would have impacted the group of Jewish believers that the writer of Hebrews is writing to –

Their concern was the now –

“We are tired of the persecution, we are tired of being outcasts – we want to go back to the temporal – we don’t want to wait”

I think sometimes when we read the text – when we come upon a word like “wait” – we have misconceptions of what the word means

We think of wait – as in we are to sit simply sit idle doing nothing

However, in the bible – wait doesn’t mean being idle.

**[Psa 25:5 NKJV] 5 Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You [are] the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.**

**[Psa 27:14 NKJV] 14 Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!**

**[Psa 52:9 NKJV] 9 I will praise You forever, Because You have done [it]; And in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for [it is] good.**

Waiting on the Lord in the bible – always involves concentration

Our waiting is not passive, our waiting is active

Abraham is not waiting around to go to heaven

He had to live by faith

**11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.**

Now, we all know how Sarah was – she was 90 years old when she conceived Isaac

She wasn't 19 or 29 – she was 90

We sit here tonight, and we say – that is impossible

This is an impossibility that was matched by faith because it was promised by God

Turn with me Gen 18

Here in Genesis 18

Abraham and Sarah are visited by two angels and the Lord (again, this is another time where we see Jesus in the Old Testament)

**[Gen 18:6-15 NKJV] 6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said,**

**"Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead [it] and make cakes." 7**

**And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave [it] to a young**

man, and he hastened to prepare it. 8 So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set [it] before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate. 9 Then they said to him, "Where [is] Sarah your wife?" So he said, "Here, in the tent." 10 And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which [was] behind him.) 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; [and] Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. 12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" 13 And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear [a child], since I am old?' 14 "Is anything too **hard** for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." 15 But Sarah denied [it], saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh!"

Sarah overheard the promise of a son

She expressed doubt

She laughs in unbelief

And the Lord not only hears Sarah laugh from inside the tent – He also knows her heart.

And I had you make a note of what the Lord asks Abraham in response to Sarah's laughter

Is anything too hard for the LORD?

The word that is used for hard – it doesn't mean difficult, it means wonderful

Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?

So we see in the life of Sarah – an imperfect faith – just like with Abraham

She had episodes of doubt in her life

Later on – in Genesis 21

**[Gen 21:1-3 NKJV] 1 And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for 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 who was born to him--whom Sarah bore to him--Isaac.**

Think about this – in Gen 18 – God made a promise

In Genesis 21 – God kept His promise

Sarah's doubt

Sarah's stumbling

Sarah's setback at the tent

These things are not what made God's promises true or false

God made a promise and He was going to keep the promise

Now, the writer of Hebrews says about Sarah - she judged Him faithful who had promised

That means that in between the laughter in ch 18 and Isaac's birth in ch 21, she began to consider the source of the promise

She began to consider the person making the promise

And she began to believe that God was able to do the impossible

She began to trust the promise of God – that in order for God's promise to become true – it was going to require a miracle

And an impossible faith leads to an impossible birth

**12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead,** (btw – the writer is referring to Abraham)

**were born [as many] as the stars of the sky in multitude--innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.**

A willing faith

A believing faith

A trusting faith becomes a rewarding faith

Sarah believes

Sarah trusts

Sarah obeys

And Sarah is rewarded

Faith gave Abraham and Sarah power to have a child when they were “as good as dead”

Now – does God promise a child to every barren couple –

What is the answer?

Of course not

But does God promise a Savior for every barren, dead, empty soul who will come to Jesus by faith and say, “I am dead inside, and I want to experience life, and love and forgiveness and hope and I want Jesus to be real in my life”

Will God keep that promise –

The answer is yes

Quote:

"Faith sees the invisible, believes the unbelievable, and receives the impossible."

Corrie Ten Boom

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I

accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

