

58-11-03.wpd -- Abraham, Father of the Faithful
 unknown, testing, faith, obedience, promise, sacrifice
 Heb 11:8-19
 Believers are commended as *faithful*, only after walking *faithfully*.

INTRODUCTION: Text as Scripture Reading

--The "faith chapter" of the Bible is filled with OT heroes of the faith, but one name stands out, **TITLE**. We get that *title* for Abraham from Rom 4:16, Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. We can only be called *children of Abraham*, if we "**are of the faith of Abraham**."
 --This "faith chapter" lists other heroes with a *faithful faith* just like Abraham's, because they not only believed God's promise, but they walked out their faith on earth as *citizens of a world yet to come*, a world whose reality was wrapped up in that promise. **HOM.idea**.
 --We see how to live that kind of *faithful faith* in Abraham's story....

I. A Faithful Faith Looks Beyond the Visible, v.8-10

- A. Most humans want knowledge. They don't like the unknown. But "*Abraham, when called...obeyed...even though he did not know...*"
1. God's idea of *faithfulness* is when we accept what He says as trustworthy, even when it means going into unknown territory.
 2. **Human knowledge** is usually the trusted basis of human action, but if based on fiction rather than facts, it fails us-- Mat 7:24-27, "Therefore everyone who **hears** these words of mine and **puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and **does not put them into practice** is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and **it fell with a great crash**."
- B. Most humans like the permanent, not the temporary, but Abraham wandered "*like a stranger in a foreign country*" and "*lived in tents*."
1. Many things in this world promise to be permanent, but they're only fooling us. Nothing lasts forever in this life-- Mat 6:19-21, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

2. *Do you think Abraham liked being a nomad?* No, like everyone else, he also wanted **permanence**, but he was looking to the right source to get it: "*he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God*."

TRANS: *A faithful faith looks beyond the visible*. When it walks in the light of God's promises, then the unknown is more certain than human knowledge, and the permanence that this world promises, but can't give, is found in the faithfulness of God. By faith, Abraham embraced an unknown life amid impermanent circumstances. He was **commended not just for believing God's call, but for walking faithfully in it**.

II. A Faithful Faith Trusts God for the Future, v.11-16

- A. [SUPPOSE...an angel came to you last night and said you were to adopt 12 children and raise them to be preachers for Earth's final days of earth before Christ returns. What would be your concerns this morning?" // a Christian couple once warned us about the evil times ahead and the danger of bringing children into the world...] Abraham (100) and Sarah (90) probably had concerns about starting a family at their age! (***Faithful faith trusts God for a future where our own strength can't help us succeed.***)
- B. But faithfulness includes passing the torch [my own concern... "*Can I pass my faith on to my kids?*"] -- Gen 18:19, For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him. -- Abraham passed on the torch, but his descendants were not always as faithful as he was.)
- C. True *children of Abraham*, which can include us, are those with a ***faithful faith***, that believe in and walk in the same viewpoint of present circumstances and the same viewpoint of God's future promises as Abraham did-- **v.13,15-16**, *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.... If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

TRANS: Those who followed Abraham's faith **were commended as faithful, only after having walked faithfully**. We ourselves want to be

commended that way. But if our faith is to be like that of the Father of the Faithful, it may be tested, as Abraham's was....

III. A Faithful Faith Is Willing to Sacrifice Everything, v.17-18

- A. [SUPPOSE...that the 12 kids you managed to adopt were now teenagers and were fully trained to go preach (you're now past 100), and the same angel comes and says, "*Take them in an airplane to the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, have them parachute out, then fly away.*" What are your concerns now?]
- B. No matter what ethical or emotional concerns Abraham had about his orders to sacrifice Isaac, he did not proceed to do it with *blind faith*... it says, "*Abraham reasoned...*"
1. Critics of Christianity set up a straw man by claiming that "faith is opposed to reason." On the contrary, a *reasonable faith* is the kind the Bible teaches. [For a short time in high school, I left the Christian faith, and *my way back* came through philosophical reasoning, as I recorded in "Journey to the Center of My Heart."]
 2. Abraham's trust in God set his reasoning to work, and the result was a belief "*that God could raise the dead.*" ("*If the world is to be blessed through Isaac, and I kill him, then God will have to resurrect Isaac in order to keep His promise.*")
- C. Why this extreme testing of Abraham's faith? Three reasons:
1. God was testing the *faithfulness* of Abraham's faith-- Gen 22:12, "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." (God Himself provided the sacrificial lamb: *Jesus!*")
 2. God was recording an example of *His own faithfulness* for the human mind of Jesus, who would be in Isaac's situation, both as a sacrifice and as the only heir of the promise (In Abraham's case, it says, "*figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death,*" but with God the Father, He would literally receive His Son back from death. I THINK Jesus needed to hear that....
 3. We also need this example of God's provision, because our faith is also be tested... we are often called upon to *let go and let God*.

CONCLUSION:

--Faith that *looks beyond the visible* and *entrusts God with the future* is *faith that can sacrifice everything*. This is **faithful faith**, and the kind that makes us children of Abraham, the Father of the Faithful. **May we also be so commended as believers who have walked faithfully.**

Heb 11:8-19 (NIV) By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. {9} By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. {10} For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. {11} 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 had made the promise. {12} 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. {13} All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. {14} People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. {15} If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. {16} Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. {17} By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, {18} even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." {19} Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.