

Simple Faith

Hebrews 11:8-10

FOCAL Read Responsively Hebrews 11:8-10 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. {9} By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: {10} For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

What is this thing we call “**faith**”? I was talking with a dear friend today who received some rather distressing news. As we talked about that news – weeping and praying together – the Lord pointed something out to my heart. You see, we often complicate our faith. We make this life extraordinarily hard when we begin to add that which is *not* faith to that which *is* faith. Sometimes that which we add to our faith robs us of blessing while leading us far away from the God Who loves us so. Faith should be *simple*. I don't mean by that that faith should be *simple minded*, for our God is all knowing and all powerful. The Christian faith is not stupid, but it is based on clear evidence and ancient but reliable testimonies. When faced with the idiotic idea that all that we see around us came from a *cosmic egg* that exploded in some mythical past in a *big bang*, or faced with the plausible idea that this complex universe we see about us was engineered by Almighty God, the Christian rightly says “I'll believe the architecture of what I see over the fantasies of a few madmen with degrees”. Simple faith tells us that this fantastic environment around us did not just *happen* to be, but it was planned and perfectly



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executed by the God of Genesis 1:1.

The early Church was *brutally persecuted* for its faith, this in itself a lasting proof of the resurrection of Christ. Christians were stoned to death, thrown in prison, lit as torches, tied up in animals skins and thrown to the lions before jeering crowds, and yet people continued to enter the faith. A man will die for the truth, but only a madman will die for a lie – and these Christians bled rivers for Christ. And yet these Christians of simple faith kept their eyes on the Lord and changed the world!

Simple faith in God doesn't guarantee that our lives will always be without trial or tribulation, but simple faith keeps us from *stunting and wasting our lives*. When you compare the life of the New Testament Saul (Paul the Apostle) to the Old Testament Saul you see the difference between a life *lived* and a life *wasted*. The New Testament Saul started out with every advantage. He was well trained by the Rabbi Gamaliel, and came from the influential and well respected Tribe of Benjamin. Saul was a leader in Israel, and a member of the ruling council of Israel, the Sanhedrin. Saul was a persecutor of the Christian Church until he met Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road. On that day he gave himself to the Lord, **counting all the advantages of his past life as dung that he might win Christ (Philippians 3:8)**. Was his life a bed of roses from that moment on? No. Saul (now known as Paul) said:

2 Corinthians 11:24-26 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. {25} Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered

shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; {26} In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

Paul ended up beheaded outside of the city of Rome on the same day as Peter was crucified inside that city¹. And yet he lived a life filled with victory. The Lord used Paul mightily in establishing Churches, in writing Scripture, and even, at one point, allowed Paul to look into Heaven itself. What a magnificent life simple faith in God brings.

But what of the Old Testament Saul? He started out with many advantages. Chosen by God to be King of Israel Saul continually followed his own heart while ignoring the direction of God. The Bible tells us in **1 Chronicles 10:4** that **“Saul took his own sword and fell on it”**. What led Saul to this terrible end? We are told in **verses 13-14** of that same chapter that

“... Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; And inquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse. “

¹ Foxes Book of Martyrs: “The Apostle's final destination this side of eternity was a spot on the Ostian Way just outside the walls of Rome. Tradition has it that Paul and Peter were martyred on the same day – the former fisherman crucified in the city, and the former Pharisee beheaded beyond the gates.”

Saul died because he refused to follow the Lord in simple faith. When we cease to glorify God in our lives, cease to be of joy to Him, He can – and will – take us home.

When confronted with something bigger than he was Saul sought help not from God, but from the world. He made ill advised treaties with enemies, consulted mediums, and relied on his own strength and wit. Like the New Testament Saul he died by sword, but he died in shame whereas the New Testament Saul died to the glory of God.

Do you want to *live* like Paul and Abraham lived, or do you want to merely *exist* then die as miserable death like King Saul did? As **Ray Pritchard** said²:

“It's not how long you live that matters, but what you do with the years you're given. Too many people die at age twenty five but aren't buried until they're seventy five. They waste the best years of their lives in trivial pursuits, all the while missing out on the excitement of living by faith”.

How's your life? It can change for the better if you'll start living by *simple faith* in God.

1. Simple Faith Means To Follow God Without Knowing All The Details

FOCAL Hebrews 11:8 **By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.**

By faith Abraham. The Bible tells us that Abraham is the father of all who believe (**Romans 4:16**), and he is our pattern for that thing we call “faith”. We are given Abraham as an example, because he did what God required of him concerning faith.

When God called Abraham the Lord told him:

Genesis 12:1 **Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee:**

Abraham lived in a large, very prosperous city called Ur of the Chaldees. Ur had a population of around 250,000, and was a well protected heavily trafficked commercial hub. God came to Abraham and said “**leave all this ... and follow Me to a land that I will show you**”. Our Hebrews text tells us that “**he went out, not knowing whither he went**”.

It is not “faith” to demand that God draw you a road map before you follow Him. It is not “faith” to give to God only when your bank account is overflowing.

This is simple faith, a faith that follows God no matter where He leads. Faith that God honors does as God

² In his sermon *The Incredible Journey*

leads, following Him with childlike simplicity one step at a time.

It takes no faith to follow God if He draws you a road map. There is no faith required if God promises water at every stopping place. There is no faith required in doing anything for God if we *wait until we have enough money before we do something for God* or if we *wait until someone opens up a dialog about Christ* before we witness. There is no faith required in a pastor asking God to lead him to a Church – but only after he sees the Church budget and knows what his projected salary will be. Faith trusts God – period!

The only thing Abraham knew for certain was that the Lord was telling him to GO – but he didn't know where, when, how long. Abraham committed his way unto the Lord, and left the results to God.

Simple faith means to *commit your way unto God while leaving the results to Him.*

The Psalmist illustrated this in ...

Psalms 37:3-5 Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. {4} Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. {5} Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

What did God ask Abraham to do? **Trust in the Lord**

and do good, and he would dwell in the Promised Land. What else was Abraham to do? **Delight himself in the Lord, and Abraham would receive the desires of his heart.** Finally God expected Abraham to **commit his way to the Lord, to trust also in Him, and God would bring it to pass.** Look at these action verbs:

Trust
Do Good
Delight
Commit
Trust

Have you ever seen a bi-directional train? That's the type of train that has a locomotive on both ends facing in opposite directions. The life of simple faith is like a train with a bidirectional train: Trust in God leads you where you are going, and trust is God allows you to leave where you are.

So many believers lose so much potential blessing because they spend more time *worrying about what they cannot change* or because they *spend so much time questioning God.*

God is God – He need answer no questions. God will take care of His people: just follow Him. Jesus tells us that we should ...

Matthew 6:25-33 ... Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more

than meat, and the body than raiment? ... O ye of little faith? {31} Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? {32} (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. {33} But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Do you want to be blessed by God? Stop questioning God and, as Abraham did, follow the Lord as He commands. Let **trust in the Lord** be the locomotive that drives you forward, always into new lands for Jesus.

2. Simple Faith Requires That We Wait Patiently On God

FOCAL Hebrews 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

When God called Abraham to follow Him he told him:

Genesis 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

These promises are sure, for **God cannot lie (Titus 1:2)**. Furthermore **God cannot change (Malachi 3:6)**, and what He has promised that He will do. **God is faithful (1 Corinthians 1:9)**, and never forgets a promise He has

made to His children. He promised Abraham a land – though He did not tell him where it was. God promised Abraham a *great name* – though He did not tell him *when* it would come to pass.

And Abraham trusted God.

Too often when we follow God we become *impatient*, offering the Lord our own solutions rather than waiting on Him. One of the greatest mistakes Abraham ever made was to try and help God. When time passed and no heir was forthcoming Abraham first tried to bear an heir through his maid Hagar, and later tried to pass his estate on ward to his trusted servant. God would have none of this. As a matter of fact, Abraham's seed from Ishmael have – to this day – plagued Israel. He would have been better off to just *wait on God*. The Scripture tells us:

Psalms 27:14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

When fear grips at your heart, **wait on the Lord**. Ask Him to **strengthen your heart** and give you assurance that He *is* in control.

Psalms 37:34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.

Wait on God, and keep His way. Do what He tells you to do. Abraham sojourned or traveled through the land of promise, but he **traveled in tents**. Though God promise

him the land he had to **wait on God and do as God said**, trusting that the Lord would in time cause him to **inherit the land**. God's timetable isn't our time table – wait on the Lord. Follow Him and do as He says *when* He says – and you will be blessed.

Proverbs 20:22 Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

Abraham would travel into areas where enemies would attack him – but he **waited on the Lord**. He waited on the Lord like a good waiter waits on his table – and was blessed.

3. Simple Faith Means To Keep Looking Upward

FOCAL Hebrews 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Abraham was blessed because Abraham *kept looking upward*. His focus was not mainly on the land that he would inherit in this life. His focus was on the **great city of God**.

Here's a spiritual principle you need to embrace and understand: where your eye goes, your faith will follow.

Abraham kept looking upward, kept looking Godward. When he and Lott stood on a grassy plain Abraham

didn't choose the choicest land for himself. Abraham, looking at Lott, said “Choose which way you will go, and I will go the other direction” (**Genesis 13:9**). Lot looked off **across the plains of Jordan**, and **pitched his tent in Sodom**. What happened with Abraham? We read:

Genesis 13:14-18 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: {15} For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. {16} And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. {17} Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. {18} Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

God honors those who honor Him. You are not honoring God when you doubt His provision, murmur, and complain.

Simple faith means to keep your eyes on God, not on self provision. Jesus said:

Matthew 6:20-23 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

{21} For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. {22} The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. {23} But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Where the eye goes, the heart goes. Lot's eye went to Sodom and, in time, he left Sodom just missing the wrath of God. Earthly cities – and earthly riches - do not last. The city of **Jerusalem** has been destroyed and rebuilt at least 47 times over the last 3500 years. When you visit Jerusalem you can't *walk where Jesus walked* – you're actually walking 30-75 feet above where Jesus walked. James tells us:

James 4:14-15 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. {15} For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

If your eyes are looking Godward, seeing all things through His will, then *you will be blessed*.

Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God, but with forgetfulness of God. Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Abraham knew that he was ultimately going to Heaven, going to see that great City of God. Our Lord said

John 8:56-58 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. {57} Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? {58} Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

In a 2004 address at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, David Dockery, president of Union University in Jackson, Tennessee said,

"Modern men and women live with the mindset that there is no heaven, no hell and therefore no guilt."

There is a Heaven – Abraham knew that and he was prepared. There is a Heavenly judgment where we will stand before Jesus and have our works weighed for reward. And there is, sadly, a hell for those who reject a simple faith in Christ Jesus for salvation.

Listen Beloved: We should regard each day of life that we have as a precious gift from God (**Romans 14:5-6**). Each day belongs to the Lord. Will you spend it for Him or waste it on nothing So many people tell God, **"I'll serve you tomorrow – I'll get right with you tomorrow"**. Don't count on tomorrow to serve God. Go when He tells you, do as He tells you *when* He tells you. Only then will you be blessed as Abraham was blessed.

May God touch your hearts with His Word.