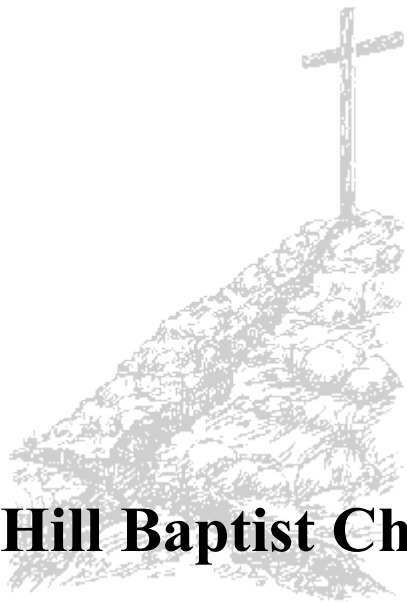


Profiles of Faith

Hebrews 11

Part 2: Abraham, The Father of Faith



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FOCAL Hebrews 11:8-19 (KJV) "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. {11} Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. {12} Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. {13} These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. {14} For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. {15} And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. {16} But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. {17} By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. {18} Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: {19} Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

When we look at the *faith that pleases God* we certainly can't overlook that Chaldean called Abraham. When we study the faith of Abraham - a faith that pleased God - we certainly can't say that his faith was always *perfect*. There were times when Abraham stumbled in his faith, just as we all have. Twice he tried to pass Sarah off as his sister in order to save his own life, and once he began to think that Ismael would be his heir rather than Isaac who was yet born. But one thing can be said of Abraham: Though he was not perfect, he was willing to *step out into strange new territories* because God asked him to do so.

Abraham Lived Outside Of His Comfort Zone

FOCAL Hebrews 11:8-9 (KJV) "**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:**"

Genesis 12:1 (KJV) "**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 was willing to live outside of his *comfort zone*, if that was where God wanted him to be. In the Eastern Countries it is not uncommon for several generations of families to live together under one roof, or in one village.

Abraham would have been raised up in an environment where his parents, grandparents, and perhaps great-grandparents all lived together. So when God came to Abraham and asked him to leave everyone he ever knew to follow Him this was against everything he had ever been taught. Yet Abraham went - and that pleased God.

Our text says "**he went out, not knowing whither he went**". The faith that pleases God is the faith that *trusts* in God. Trust in God does not mean that He needs to tell us every small detail of the way. God did not come to Abraham and say, "Now here's a map, Abraham. I want you to go here, then here, then cross this river, then, to this place". God did no such thing! God said, "You go where I tell you to go and I will bless you".

How thorough was Abraham's commitment to God? When Abraham traveled from his homeland to the Promised Land he took his nephew Lot with him. At a certain point these two households began to come into conflict. You see, the Bible says:

Genesis 13:6 (KJV) "**And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.**"

that God had so blessed Abraham and Lot that their sheep and cattle had become *huge herds*. If you raise livestock you know that so many cattle and sheep require so much land - and these two herds couldn't remain together any more. What did Abraham do?

Genesis 13:8-9 (KJV) "And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. {9} Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

Abraham looked at Lot and, though as the elder Abraham had the right to first choice of the land, he left the choice up to Lot. "You pick which way you want to go, and I'll go the other way". Abraham knew that God was going to bless him no matter what Lot chose, so he was content to let his nephew stake his claim first. Well Lot was a rather faithless fellow, and he looked out and chose what seemed to be the richer of the lands. Abraham chose the other way and, following God, he was blessed while his nephew was cursed when Sodom and Gomorrah fell under the punishment of God.

If we will live outside of our comfort zone being obedient to God *no matter what anybody else does* then we will always be blessed. People may be faithless, but God is always faithful, dependable, and trustworthy. What He has promised, that will He do - and it offends Him when we do not act in faith on what He directs we do.

Abraham Was Christ-Centered

FOCAL Hebrews 11:9-10 (KJV) "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."

The reason that Abraham was able to exercise a faith that pleased God was that he *kept his eyes on God*. Abraham occupied his mind with Christ, not with the things of this world. Abraham's thought processes ran along the lines of what our Lord Jesus taught, when He said:

Luke 14:27-33 (KJV) "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. {28} For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? {29} Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, {30} Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. {31} Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? {32} Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. {33} So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

Abraham *counted the cost*. He considered what God asked him to do, then considered the cost of *not doing what God said*, and knew then that the only logical choice would be to follow God. There are a thousand and

one reasons for *not doing* what God says, not responding to the Lord in faith, but there is one *overwhelming reason* why the believer should forsake all and follow Christ.

You can never lose when you follow God!

Abraham followed God from his homeland and into strange lands because he trusted that God would see him through. He didn't just trust God with his physical location, but he also trusted God with his *continuing heritage*. The Bible says:

FOCAL Hebrews 11:11-12 (KJV) "Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. {12} Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable."

God had promised Abraham a lineage *as the sands of the sea*, that many nations would come out of his wife Sarah. Yet as time passed and Abraham became more and more unable to produce children, it seemed as if God had forgotten this promise. But God was still faithful, and Abraham had his child Isaac when he was a hundred years old:

Genesis 21:5-8 (KJV) "And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. {6} And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh,

so that all that hear will laugh with me. {7} And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age. {8} And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned."

We often waste much energy doubting God or asking Him how He's going to accomplish what He has said He would do. Why do we waste energy on something that certainly *disappoints* our Savior? The Scripture says:

Jeremiah 9:23-24 (KJV) "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: {24} But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD."

God *delights* in lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness - shall He not do that which He has promised? He was faithful to save you - will he not be faithful to sustain you now that He has saved you? God proves your faith by seeing how you *put your faith in action*. Abraham's faith was the sort of faith that pleased God because it was the sort of faith that *did what God told him to do*. We read:

James 2:20-23 (KJV) "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? {21} Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had

offered Isaac his son upon the altar? {22} Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? {23} And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God."

Faith is more than mere words - it is action and reaction based on what God the Lover of my soul tells me to do.

Abraham Was Forward Thinking

FOCAL Hebrews 11:13-16 (KJV) "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. {14} For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. {15} And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. {16} But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. "

Genesis 17:4-5 (KJV) "As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. {5} Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee."

God told Abraham "a father of many nations I have made thee" - but Abraham never lived to see this

promise fulfilled. I find it interesting that God spoke to Abraham in the *past tense*, "**of many nations I have made thee**", though the promise had not yet been fulfilled.

In order to have the faith that pleases God, you must *believe God and not your senses*. God lives outside of time. He is *immense*, over all, and all around us. God tells us:

Isaiah 55:8-9 (KJV) "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. {9} For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

God's mind sees all things simultaneously, the beginning from the end. To God time is no barrier, but yesterday, today, and tomorrow are all the same to Him. He is the Great *I Am*, always there so if you want to have a faith that pleases God you must trust Him regardless as to what your senses tell you.

God demands our trust! And trust means *unquestioned obedience to His leading*. In verse 15 we read:

FOCAL Hebrews 11:15-16 (KJV) "And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. {16} But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. "

When Abraham left his homeland and began his journey of faith he *refused to look backward*. Looking back from where you came is one of the worst things that anyone can do. Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

Luke 9:62 (KJV) "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

When a farmer plows a field he keeps a straight row by *looking forward* to a fixed point on the horizon. If he does this every row will be straight. When Abraham left his family lands he not only *physically* left those lands, he *mentally* left those lands. God led him from Ur of the Chaldees, and he was never going back! He had his eye on God's leading, not on where he'd been and God was blessing him more and more every day.

When Israel left Egypt under God's saving hand, that which ultimately destroyed the first generation was not *the unbelievers* around them. What destroyed Israel was that they *kept living in the past, living in Egypt in their minds*. Every time God gave Israel a test they followed this same mindset:

Numbers 14:2-4 (KJV) "And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! {3} And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return

into Egypt? {4} And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt."

You see, though they had left Egypt *physically*, they had never left Egypt *mentally*. They were still trapped in that mindset of defeat - a mindset that eventually caused the entire first generation, minus Joshua and Caleb, to die in the wilderness.

The Bible gives us a *beautiful illustration* as to how God expects us to live our lives before Him. It says:

Hebrews 12:1-2 (KJV) "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, {2} Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

When the marathon runner got ready to run his race, he took off all clothing and weights that would in any way hinder him. Then he fixed his eyes on the finish line, and began to **run with patience** that race that was set before him. Abraham put away all thoughts of where he had been and fixed his eye of faith on The Lord God. Where the Lord led, he followed, and because he followed the Lord the small errors in judgment he occasionally made *remained small, and did not become overwhelming*.

Our text has an interesting statement to make:

Abraham's Faith Rested On God's Logic

FOCAL Hebrews 11:16 (KJV) "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. "

God was **not ashamed** to recognize Abraham as His child by faith. The best thing that we as believers can give to our Heavenly Father is *an obedient heart* that makes Him proud of us. I want God to be proud of me. I want Him to, when I close my eyes for the last time in this life, to hear Him say *well done, my good and faithful servant*. I want Him to be pleased with my life. It is certain that I can do nothing to earn or deserve my salvation, but I do want my Savior to be pleased - and not ashamed - of my performance. The Great Apostle, again using the *analogy of running*, said:

1 Corinthians 9:26-27 (KJV) "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: {27} But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway¹."

The Apostle did not labor as hard as he did in order to *remain saved*, but he labored hard because he knew that he represented Jesus Christ. He didn't want his ministry in any way to shame the Master, He Who loved us so much that He gave His life for us. Abraham kept his eyes on the Lord so much so that the Lord was *never ashamed* to say "I am his God". What a wonderful testimony!

FOCAL Hebrews 11:17-19 (KJV) "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. {18} Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: {19} Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

Genesis 22:2-3 (KJV) "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. {3} And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him."

Finally, Abraham relied not on his own human understanding, but relied on the logic of God. God told Abraham to take his only son Isaac to the land of Moriah and offer him up as a sacrifice. When Abraham received this message he didn't try to reason with God - he just went and did exactly as God said.

If your God is no bigger than you are, then you will never do anything greater than what is *mortally possible*. But if your God is the God of the Bible, the Great *I Am*, and you follow His direction - then you will accomplish great things for Him.

¹ adokimos {pronounced ad-ok'-ee-mos}, something unfit or shameful

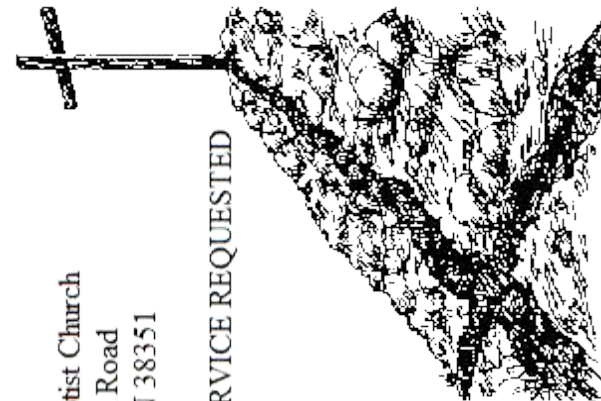
When Abraham received God's command to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice he immediately responded. Why? Because God gave him Isaac when he was a hundred years old. It was *impossible* for Abraham to have a child that late in life, at least, according to human logic. But the God Who called Abraham and led Abraham is the God of the impossible! The Bible says:

Jeremiah 32:17 (KJV) "Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:"

Abraham used *God logic* when the Lord told him to sacrifice Isaac. He thought, "Even if I do kill my son, God will raise him from the grave - for God is able". So focusing on those three words, **God is able**, Abraham went to Moriah and trusted the rest to God.

Listen Beloved, we are not called to do the impossible - we do the possible, while God does the impossible! If we trust Him and do as He says we will *never* go wrong!

I pray that God will touch your hearts with these words.



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