

Faith: Learning to Trust God Like Our Heroes (Hebrews 11)

Sermon Notes for Message #5: The Key Elements of Faith (11:8-12) – Pastor Jeff

- The Hebrews writer is using many Old Testament men and women of faith to teach us about the various elements of faith (confident trust in whatever God say is true and acting on it regardless of the circumstances or consequence):
 - It is trust in the foreseen (v. 1a: *“assurance of things hoped for”*)
 - It is trust in the unseen (v. 1b: *“the conviction of things unseen”*).
 - It is trust in God’s way of blessing (v. 2: *“for by it men of old gained approval”*)
 - It is trust in God’s powerful and miraculous word (v. 3: *“the worlds were prepared by the word of God”*)
 - It is trust in worshipping God His way and counted righteous like Abel (v. 4)
 - It is trust that walks with God and pleases Him like Enoch (v. 5-6; Gen. 5:18-24)
 - It is trust that righteously obeys God about things you haven’t seen yet like Noah (v. 7)
- Now, God moves from primeval history (Gen. 1-11) to the Patriarchal history of Genesis 12 and beyond to highlight two faith-walkers (Abraham & Sarah) and their story covers almost one third of Genesis (2,000yrs and 20 generations – Gen. 11:27-25:18)
- Let’s learn about five key elements of faith from the life of Abraham and Sarah:
 - ❶ **Faith involves a unique calling** (11:8a: *“by faith Abraham when he was called...”*)
 - Abraham was *“called”* by God which reminds us that He is the One who motivates and initiates a faith relationship with Him. He was called out of Ur to settle in Haran and then head to the land of Canaan (Gen. 11:27-12:3). This wasn’t Abraham’s desire, idea or dream, but God’s.
 - God is the caller in our relationship with Him. He gives:
 - A general call to everyone to repent and believe the gospel (Matt. 22:14; Mark 1:14-15)
 - An effectual call to those He has chosen to come to Him by faith (Rom. 8:30; 2 Tim. 1:9; Gal. 1:15; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 1 Pet. 2:9). Abraham didn’t seek God, but God sought Him (Gen. 15:7) and we are called by Him as well (Rev. 17:14b; Jude 1).
 - ❷ **Faith involves an unusual compliance** (Heb. 11:8b: *“obeyed by going out...and he went out, not knowing where he was going”*)
 - The nature of genuine faith is to obey God (called *“the obedience of faith”* – Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Obedience is an outward visible expression of an inward faith and the Hebrews writer is asking us whether we believe God or not.
 - When God called Abraham, He didn’t tell him he was headed for Canaan. By faith, Abraham left the land of pagans for the land of promise (He was called out of Ur, then Haran, then *“Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house to the land which I will show you”* (Gen. 12:1b). All He knew about the location from God was *“I will show you”* and Abraham went.
 - Abraham exchanged the known for the unknown and following Christ is like this: Are you willing to trade your way for God’s sacrificial way (Luk 9:23), love Him more than your family (Luk. 14:26), put Hm first above all else (Luk. 9:62)
 - ❸ **Faith involves an uncomfortable circumstance** (11:9)
 - Faith in God is willing to live like an alien, nomad, or pilgrim in this world like Abraham (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11; Eph. 2:12, 19; Heb. 11:13). God promised Abraham an *“inheritance”* (*“the land of promise”* in Canaan) and He promises to give us an eternal *“inheritance”* in Christ.

- Abraham, as an heir to the promised land (Canaan), never owned a piece of ground (Acts 7:5) except for the cave of Machpelah where he would bury his wife. As people of faith, we often live in conditions that seem to contradict God's promises. We understand that this life is an *"already, not yet"* faith experience (we know one day will be perfect in heaven and we can enjoy peace, love, grace, wisdom and joy now, but there will be trials, sorrow and persecution in this life as well - Acts 14:22; 2 Cor. 6:16; Rom. 8:18)
- We need to adopt the mindset of a pilgrim in a foreign country. We should live, talk and look differently in this temporary homeland since we are headed to our eternal home in heaven.

④ Faith involves an unmatched captivation (11:10)

- There are many beautiful and enjoyable things in this world that can captivate our hearts, but there is nothing better than God's future city in which we will eternally live. Abraham's hope wasn't in tents and altars, but he was looking *"for the city...whose architect and builder is God"* (v. 10; see also 11:16; 12:22; 13:14)
- We need to manage our expectations and longings. There is much to enjoy in this life and God's creation (though cursed and groaning for its redemption), but God has planned so much more. Even in our faith, justification was easy (we just believed), sanctification is hard (we daily need to fight the good fight of faith), but glorification will be the best as we spend eternity in a place untouched by sin's curse and built by God, our Master architect and builder.

⑤ Faith involves an unbeatable confidence (11:11-12)

- Abraham and Sarah faced the insurmountable challenges of life (*"as good as dead"* seed, barrenness) with faith, but not at first (when they laughed at God about His promise to give them a child when it was physically impossible – Gen. 17:15-19; 18:11-13). God gave them a promised son and named Him Isaac (*"He laughs"*) to remind them both of their initial unbelieving doubt that later turned to believing joy (Gen. 21:6-7).
- We learn two great lessons:
 - **We are the promise-believers** whose faith focuses on God's power and faithfulness, not our human impotence (v. 11). We must be careful not to misunderstand and misapply God's amazing promises (some are conditional, some unconditional, some to Israel, nations, the Apostles, and some to all believers). God is able to do anything and we trust in His great love to give the best to us, His wisdom to know the best for us and His great power to provide the best for us.
 - **God is the promise-keeper** and our faith trusts God to keep His word in His time and not ours (v. 12). Abraham's life of faith seemed like a failure (uprooted from his upbringing, lived in tents, waited 25yrs for God's promised son Isaac, didn't live long enough to see the multiplication of descendants God promised (Heb. 11:13), yet God's word is being fulfilled through Israel's history, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the untold multitudes who are children of Abraham by faith. His delays are not His denials.