

March 11th, 2012

The Faith of Abraham

Hebrews 11:8-19

Ryan Habbena

Sovereign precious Lord, we confess You as the Creator of Heaven and earth, the One who has saved us out of the domain of darkness. You are the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You are the ever living King and we thank You that You have made us Your children. Lord be with us today as we peer into Your precious Word. We know that we do not avail ourselves to Your Word as much as we should, Lord forgive us. But we ask You that You illuminate our hearts and our minds and quicken our feet to be able to put these things into practice. So that in all things in our life we might give honor and glory to the One who purchased us and purified us to be a people zealous for good works. In His name we pray, Amen.

Well all three monotheistic religions in the world, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all of these hold the person of Abraham in high regard. Each really see Abraham as their father. Now be sure Abraham is indeed an extremely important and prominent figure in God's true story of salvation. But what really matters for every individual regardless of nationality, regardless of gender, regardless of religious history, is that you have faith like Abraham. Now last week we began a tour of the "Hall of Faith" in the Book of Hebrews. And we saw in Chapter 11 that the author of Hebrews declares the reality of creation, believing in creation by faith (Hebrews 11:3). And then we proceeded to see the faith of Abel, of Enoch, and of Noah (Hebrews 11:4-7). Now at this point we are going to see the author of Hebrews pause and give considerable attention to the person of Abraham and his faith. And in looking at this we are going to see why it is essential that we follow in the footsteps of Abraham's faith.

Now before we get to our text today, let's be reminded of the context. Now we see at the beginning of Hebrews 11 is that the "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the convictions of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation." (Hebrews 11:1-2) Now even before this we saw the warning given to those in the context of the Book of Hebrews regarding that we are not to shrink away and we receive the assurance that those who are true

believers in Jesus of Nazareth will not shrink back, but we are of those who have faith unto the preservation of the soul. (ref Hebrews 10:39) So of those, of faith, we see that, we are going to see who these people indeed are. And this has been the “Hall of Faith” (Hebrews 11) and we see at the beginning here “faith is the assurance of things hoped for” So faith is belief. But as we look through Abel, through Enoch, through Noah, we see that faith always brings with it action, obedience. And Abel we see that he gave God a sacrifice though God was unseen he gave Him the best of his flocks and thus was commended for his faith (Hebrews 11:4). Enoch in the midst of an increasingly wicked world, walked with God, with the unseen God and thus he was taken (Hebrews 11:5). And Noah, when warned about things not yet seen regarding the coming rain and flood upon the earth, he acted in faith (Hebrews 11:7). We see all of these matters, of belief-action, and action in that which is unseen, and all of these elements we are going to see continued throughout Hebrews 11.

So if you do have your Bibles, please turn with me to Hebrews 11:8. Now we come to the extremely significant example of the person of Abraham. “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.” (Hebrews 11:8-10 ESV)

So just so we are reminded, really the author (Hebrews) here is taking us progressively through the Book of Genesis. We saw creation, Abel, Enoch, Noah, and now Abraham. And Abraham was called out of the land of Ur which was east of the Promised Land (Israel). This was a land of idolatry (Ur) and by faith Abraham obeyed. He was called to go out to a place where he received as an inheritance. And this is speaking of the land of promise, the land of Israel. And we see here that he did not know where he was going, so again remembering the theme of faith in that which is of unseen. The Lord appeared to Abraham and called him out of Ur and go to this place of inheritance (ref Genesis 12:1-9). Now there is a significant portion here that we need to understand because it is significant in our lives as well. Abraham went out and he went and lived in this very land of promise but he lived in tents. Now a tent is something by its very nature isn't really permanent. We look at the tabernacle in Israel in the early days of the Israelites and it was a tent because they were on the move.

So Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the heirs of the promise, they lived in this land that God promised them but they were living in tents. Thus declaring that even though they were residing, their feet were actually standing on a land that was promised to them, that promise had not come to fruition, to its fullness yet. And thus we see he was looking forward to a city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10). Now when we look at a city that has foundations, this is intended to be in contrast with tents. Tents do not have foundations. A tent is propped up and taken down and moved to its next place when it's ready to go. A city that has foundations is one that is laid to be permanent.

And the city that Abraham was looking forward is indeed permanent because its designer and builder is God Himself and that city is not going to go anywhere. Therefore, Abraham went out from his land and actually resided in this land of promise but still by faith looked forward to God fulfilling His promise to give him that land and it was going to be a permanent land with a permanent city. And we will re-address this because as we progress not only in the Book of Hebrews but in the whole council of God, we see that Abraham's hope of a city is the same hope that all of us have as His children.

Moving on to Hebrews 11:11-12; "By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of Heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore"  
(Hebrews 11:11-12 ESV)

Here is the author of Hebrews now brings up his first woman in the Hall of Faith (Hebrews 11), and we will see others as we progress. But here we see Sarah, Abraham's wife, and even though when we look in the Book of Genesis we see that both Abraham and Sarah at times wavered in their faith. We know that Sarah laughed when told regarding when that she was going to conceive (Genesis 18:12). We know that Abraham wavered at times fearing rather than trusting God telling on numerous occasions that "Sarah was his sister" (ref Genesis 12:13, Genesis 20:2). Nevertheless Abraham and Sarah had a God-granted-faith, a genuine faith that indeed trusted in God. So therefore we see that Sarah received power to conceive even though she was past the age, so Sarah believed and she considered Him faithful who had promised (Hebrews 11:11).

And we know the story well that Abraham and Sarah were promised a son, an heir, that would come through Sarah and we see the wavering of faith. Recall the episode with Hagar (ref Genesis 16). But we see here that ultimately God was faithful and Abraham and Sarah fixed their eyes on that which was unseen and that which would have been thought of as impossible. They were well on in age. Abraham was seen as good as dead meaning not being able to reproduce and certainly Sarah would be seen as one whose womb was shut for good. But God was faithful to His promise and indeed Sarah and Abraham trusted. And even at that point we see that there were born descendants as many as the stars of Heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore (Hebrews 11:12). With God all is possible and nothing is too hard for Him. Therefore we see in Abraham and in Sarah they received commendation for trusting the Lord because their faith was already vindicated, at this time we can see they received children, offspring-innumerable. But indeed there will be further vindication of their faith as we will see.

Moving on to in Hebrews 11:13-16 “These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city.” (Hebrews 11:13-16 ESV)

So it is speaking of these all died in faith and this is probably speaking of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob. They heard the promises of receiving this land and being planted forever. But they died not having received the ultimate fulfillment of this promise. But notice they saw them and greeted them from afar (Hebrews 11:13). These things were still a long way off. Remember faith is the assurance of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). Thus they saw them from afar knowing that God was going to fulfill His promise. And there are really three, three active aspects here that I want to stress and highlight. First off they acknowledged something. They all acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles. And that is important because they are strangers and exiles recognizing that they truly are not of this world. Instead they are looking for another kingdom, another city.

They acknowledged they were strangers and exiles here on earth. But they are indeed seeking, they acknowledged they are strangers but they are seeking a homeland. We see that if they would had been thinking about going to a home land from which they would have had gone out they would of just gone back. They were seeking another country, another land, and this is unseen. But it was promised and they were not looking to go back to the land of Ur, rather they're seeking their own homeland. And the seeking also we see as a desire. They desire a better country that is a heavenly one. God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city (Hebrews 11:16) and what is this city? This city is the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem He has prepared a city, He is preparing their city.

And what does it mean that God is not ashamed to be called their God? (Hebrews 11:16) Because even though we are standing at a place where many of these promises have not found their fulfillment on the scene of human history, God will vindicate his name in fulfilling their hope and desire for a Heavenly city, therefore He is not ashamed to be called their God. He has prepared a place for them and one day will usher them into this city. Now these are all speaking of the fore-fathers of the faith, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But all of these are matters which have great impact and significance for us.

Now as we proceed we are going to hear about another snippet in the life of Abraham here. And we are going to see the faith of Abraham in God's promise. We are going to see Abraham's trust here. In Hebrews 11:17-19, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back." (Hebrews 11:17-19 ESV)

So we are with Abraham here and we are at that significant point on Mount Moriah. Abraham finally received that promise. Sarah conceived and gave birth to a son Isaac (Genesis 21:1-4) and it was through him that the Lord said that He would fulfill this promise, "your offspring that which are going to be greater than the sand and the sea". (ref Genesis 17:5-6, Genesis 17:16) Then Abraham was tested, he was told to go to Mount Moriah which is where the city of Jerusalem sits on top of right now and to sacrifice his only son. Abraham obeyed and he considered that God was able to even raise him from the dead.

He knew that God had promised that it was through Isaac that His offspring would be named (Genesis 21:12, Hebrews 11:18, Romans 9:7). Thus he trusted if I go through with this even, if God does not intervene, He'll raise him from the dead. Now where do we see this in the Old Testament? A lot of people think that the author of Hebrews had a special insight here and certainly being under the inspiration of the Scriptures there may be something there, but there is evidence for this in Genesis. Turn with me to Genesis 22. In Genesis 22 we see right at the beginning of verse 1, "God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." (Ok) "So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar" (Genesis 22:1-4). Now here is the place where Abraham, we see Abraham's faith in this text. "Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come to you again" (Genesis 22:5). Notice he said "we will go and worship and we will both return". I think the nuance here is that Abraham was reasoning within himself "even if I sacrifice my son, because the Lord has promised that through him my offspring will be greater than the sand and the sea, He will even raise him from the dead."

And then we progress and see the glorious type and again we see that, from which, figuratively speaking and that is also can be translated that also which as a type he did receive him back (Hebrews 11:19). They went to Mount Moriah and the Lord intervened and he received him (Isaac) back as a type. Now on that mountain, the Lord spared Abraham's only son. But 2000 years later the Lord did not spare His only Son (Jesus) on that mountain but rather delivered Him up for us all and received Him back by indeed raising His Son from the dead.

Now given all these matters I have four points that I want us to consider and draw from this significant text. First off, be sure you are of the offspring of Abraham. Now as I mentioned at the outset of the message, everybody, mostly everybody lays claim to Abraham as their father. Muslims, Jews, Christians. But the truth is only those who have faith like Abraham are partakers of the promise given to Abraham. And Abraham's faith was placed in God's Word and in God's promise.

And there is no clearer or more concise portion of Scripture that defines who are truly are the offspring of Abraham in the sense of those who that are going to inherit the promise than in Galatians 3. Now first off, early on in the chapter it says that “the Gospel was preached beforehand to Abraham, saying “in you and your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed” (Galatians 3:8). And Paul wants us to be very clear on the fact that it is those of who are of faith who are truly sons of Abraham (Galatians 3:9), sons in the sense that the ones that will inherit the promises. And in the culmination of this chapter we see that we are included in this promise given to Abraham through the person and work of Jesus Christ. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.” (Galatians 3:27-29)

So you must be one of Abraham’s offspring and if you are Christ’s, how are you Christ’s, how do you become one of Christ’s people? It is having faith like Abraham. Recall that Abraham was called out of the idolatrous land of Ur. Likewise we all dwell in an idolatrous, sinful land, planet earth. Every tribe, nation, and tongue, everyone descended from our first parents (Adam and Eve) is born enslaved to sin. But God has set His promise in motion which had its origins before the foundation of the world. But we do indeed see the calling of Abraham out of the idolatrous land of Ur and he heard God’s promise and he believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

Now in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son (Galatians 4:4), who is the heir of the promise and we read in 2 Corinthians that all of promises of God are in Christ Jesus and yes an Amen! And what we know of as the New Testament beginning in the Book of Matthew starts off as noting that Jesus is the son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1). True God and true man, born of a virgin, lived a perfect sinless life. And then on the mount, Mount Moriah, He was nailed to a tree, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Three days later after His death, death could not hold Him and He was raised forevermore, received to the Father and the heir of the Kingdom of God. This is the Good News. And the King stood and commissioned His people to go out to all the nations, remember the promise to Abraham, “in you and your seed I will bless all the nations”.

Jesus of Nazareth came and sent out His messengers to all the nations. Repent and believe the Gospel, the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. That is the Good News. There is no other name under Heaven by which men may be saved (Acts 4:12). Therefore if you have not believed in this Jesus, repent, turn from your sin, and believe in Jesus of Nazareth and you will become an offspring of Abraham. Your sins will be forgiven and the glorious promises which we are only beginning to understand and are only beginning to unfold are ours forevermore.

So those that are Abraham's offspring are like Abraham. That's one of the, in the Hebrew culture and language, a son often was someone who was considered to be "like", son of Abraham, like Abraham. And thus we are to emulate our father in many different ways, (Second point) and one of the ways is we are to know that we are sojourners, know you are a sojourner. Now a sojourner is a pilgrim, one that is dwelling in a land that is not their homeland. We saw Abraham himself roam the Promise Land. In the same way we are sojourners in this world. We are pilgrims.

The Apostle Peter tells us these things in his first Epistle, 1 Peter 2:9-11, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a Holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul." (1 Peter 2:9-11 ESV)

So first off, we see Peter talking and this is to primarily Gentiles, but both Gentiles and Jews, that those who believe in Jesus of Nazareth, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a Holy nation. These were terms that were formally only applied to the kingdom of Israel. Now Gentiles are grafted into these magnificent promises and we are a chosen to a royal priesthood. Yet we are sojourners. We are sojourners, we are pilgrims. Like our King who while here said "I am not of this world and my kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). And thus the calling is as sojourners and exiles, abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul (1 Peter 2:11). The calling here is not to be conformed to this world as this world is not your homeland. Therefore do not be conformed to its patterns. Instead know that you are a sojourner.



We are constituents of the Kingdom of God. We are citizens of the Heavenly City. Therefore we live by the principles of its King. We are to know we are sojourners. This is an important place for us as the people of God as this world view will help us live with a proper context and our minds will be oriented towards that which is above not which is of below. And it is our calling to walk in the will of the Lord by grace through faith.

Thirdly, like our father, like Abraham look to the promised City. Now later on in the Book of Hebrews, we see the author of Hebrews includes us, all of us who believe like Abraham with Abraham in the hope for this city that was promised to him. Hebrews 13:14, “For here we have no lasting city, (that is the definition of a sojourner, a pilgrim) but we seek the city that is to come.” This is our hope. The Lord has promised us a city and this is a purifying hope. Why is it a purifying hope? Because related to the last point we stand as sojourners right now, we stand as pilgrims. But does not mean that we do not have a city, a homeland. It is simply right now unseen. Therefore we walk by faith knowing that this city is already a reality! What did Jesus say? “I go to prepare a place for you so that where I am you may be also” (John 14:2-3).

And in everything we see right now, our possessions, the achievements in this world, indeed our very lives, these things are transient they are passing away. Thus we are not called to fix our eyes on them. But the Kingdom that is promised us, the city that is promised to come, these things are unshakeable as their designer and architect is God Himself. So we are called by the words of our King Himself we are to “store up treasure in Heaven” (Matthew 6:19-20, Luke 12:33). We are to forsake the deceptive desires of the flesh, the boastful pride of life, and instead like our father Abraham look to the city that is coming. Our city, the New Jerusalem and live like this is a reality, live like it! Now Abraham looked forward to the city and greeted these things from afar. But the more important thing that Abraham saw and looked forward to and greeted to from afar was the Lamb of God, the King.

And that is the fourth point, like our Father Abraham look to the Lamb, look to the Lamb of God, Jesus of Nazareth. In John 8 we see a very heated exchange between some of the Jews, the countrymen that were opposing Jesus and the King Himself. Now initially these men aligned themselves with Jesus, but Jesus challenged them and their faith was proved to be transient or inauthentic.

But in the context of this, we see Jesus speaking of Abraham and that indeed Abraham saw His day, the day of Christ. In John 8:56-58, “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see My day. He saw it and was glad.” So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I Am.” So we here see certainly Jesus is greater than Abraham as He is God in human flesh. But note that we see here our King, Jesus said that “Abraham saw His day” (John 8:56). Now in the context of the Gospels we see Jesus speaking of “my hour”, “my day”, “my time”, and most of the time those things are pointed towards His triumph on the Cross and Resurrection. And so where would of it been where Abraham “saw Jesus’ day”? Where would he would of seen this and it would of made him glad? I think precisely where we already had looked in Genesis 22 in the events on Mount Moriah. Remember when they were ascending Mount Moriah and Isaac had would on his back, ascending the Mount, and Isaac asked “I see the fire, I see the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering”? (Genesis 22:7) And what did Abraham declare? “God will provide a lamb” (Genesis 22:8).

Now as we progress we see that the Lord intervened but the Lord didn’t provide a lamb, it was a ram and a ram was sacrificed (Genesis 22:13). And thus our father Abraham stood on that very Mount where 2000 years later where the Lord was going to provide a Lamb, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He saw it, greeted it from afar, and was glad. The Lord will indeed provide and we know that the Lord has provided in the person and work of Jesus Christ all that is needed for salvation. The Lord provided a Lamb and He provided a Lamb for all of us. Remember as the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. It wasn’t just for Israel it was for every tribe, nation, and tongue. He provided. And thus like our father we look forward we have the blessed privilege on looking back at the once and for all finished work of Jesus Christ and looking upwards at the Lamb, the King, interceding, and reigning from the right hand of God the Father. We are look to Him because He is the all-sufficient, powerful, supreme reservoir for our souls. And remember brothers and sisters He is indeed right now unseen. Thus faith is the substance, the assurance of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).

We are to live by faith, looking to Him knowing that one day He is returning. And one day we all that believe in Jesus will be reunited with Abraham, with Isaac, with Jacob.

Our feet will be planted in the land of promise and all of us together will recline at the marriage supper of the Lamb and fix our eyes on Jesus who purchased us and live with Him forevermore. Thank You Lord. Let's pray.

Father we look at what You have laid out before us, the history that You have ordained and established for us to read and understand, to hear and heed. Lord we marvel that we are part of this history. We see that You have fulfilled Your promise, that You have blessed the nations through the seed of Abraham. We see that through the power and glory of Your Son. Lord help us all the more live for Him and through Him. We need Your grace Lord, we are a wretched people, a people that so often falls, stumbles and gets entangled in the things of this world. Lord forgive us, establish us, and help us walk in a way that pleases You. Lord we want to honor You. Lord we ask that You would conform us to the image of Jesus. May we have faith like was demonstrated in our father Abraham, may we look towards Your Son, may we look towards Your city, and live like these things are a reality. And Lord we are anxious for Your Son to return. And we do ask that You would work in us what is pleasing in Your sight, that we would take the most of every opportunity to store up treasures in Heaven. And whatever crowns that You may give us that we might have the privilege at being able to throw them at your feet, confessing that You and You alone deserve honor, praise, and glory. In Jesus precious name we pray, Amen!

**Sermon By**

Ryan Habbena

**Delivered On**

March 11th, 2012

**Delivered At**

Conquering King Fellowship

Black Hawk Middle School

1540 Deerwood Drive

Eagan, MN 55122

**Service**

Sundays, 10:00am CST

**Contact**

[ckfellowship.org](http://ckfellowship.org)

651.797.8427