

By Faith – Abraham and Sarah

Hebrews 11

Introduction

1. This chapter of faith was intended to move the readers away from their timidity and complacency to a bold display of trust in God and His promises.
 2. While the specific exemplars of faith mentioned follow chronologically, perhaps the most notable of the list is the father of faith himself – Abraham (occupies the greater space of Hebrews 11).
 - a. He is the **“father of all those who believe” (Romans 4:11).**
 - b. As it was promised to him – **Genesis 17:5** – Father of many nations (not just physical nation, but the father of faith to those who possess such – **Romans 4:16-17**).
 3. He is our father if we walk in the steps of faith he had – **Romans 4:12**
 4. The faith of Abraham and his wife Sarah is excellent in showing us of what faith consists, and how it is manifested.
- I. By Faith Abraham
- A. Faith is Willing to Leave the Known for the Unknown **(v. 8)**
 - a. Abraham’s prior life:
 - i. **Genesis 11:27-32** – Father Terah, home Ur of the Chaldeans.
 - ii. **Acts 7:2-4** – Stephen identifies the time of the call of **Genesis 12:1-3** as when he dwelt in Ur of the Chaldeans.
 - iii. What he was leaving:
 1. **Ur of the Chaldeans** – in Mesopotamia – FERTILE, WELL IRRIGATED, HIGHLY CIVILIZED AND CULTURED.
 2. **False religion – Terah – Joshua 24:2-3** – served false gods.
 - a. “The ancient city was dedicated to the worship of the moon-god.” (ISBE)
 - b. “The Talmud says Terah worshipped no less than 12 deities.” (ISBE)
 3. Age – 75 yrs – **Genesis 12:4** – when he departed.
 - b. For 75 years Abraham knew the religion of his father, and the comforts of Mesopotamia, but the word of God changes everything.
 - i. **Hebrews 11:8** – God communicated to Him, and he obeyed God.
 - ii. **Genesis 12:1** – to a land I will show you – not given detail about it, not given a survey of it, but MADE THE DECISION TO OBEY GOD SIMPLY BY TRUSTING HIS WORD.
 - c. **Hebrews 11:9-10** – indicates he had a greater focus in mind – not the physical land of promise, but the spiritual city of God.
 - i. He didn’t know what his journey would look like.
 - ii. He didn’t know anything about the land he was called to.
 - iii. He didn’t know the exact plans of God.

- iv. He DID know God rewarded diligent seekers of Him (**Hebrews 11:6**) and trusted the reward would be worth any of the unknown he'd have to endure.
 - d. Faith is trust in God's word, not what can be seen – **2 Corinthians 5:7**
 - e. Faith is willing to count loss for Christ – **Philippians 3:7-8**
 - f. Faith follows God wherever He leads, even the unknown, because it knows God is there – **Psalm 139:7-12**
- B. Faith Does Not Dwell on the Past (**v. 15**)
- a. **Hebrews 11:15** – If they longed for their old home, they could have found opportunity to go back.
 - i. **Genesis 24:5-6** – Abraham told his servant to go back to find Isaac a wife, but under no circumstances to take Isaac there.
 - ii. There was no desire at all to return – **Genesis 24:1** – God had blessed Abraham immensely.
 - b. What if Abraham had continually dwelt on his father's religion, and the fertile land of Mesopotamia, a land he could actually call his home rather than being a sojourner?
 - i. His walk with God would have been made more difficult.
 - ii. His vision would have been split.
 - c. We must not look back – **Luke 9:61-62** – not fit for kingdom.
 - i. As Demas – **2 Timothy 4:10**
 - d. To avoid this, we have to put the past to death:
 - i. Put to death – **Romans 6:6, 11**
 - ii. Crucify – **Galatians 2:20; 5:24-25; 6:14** – open and shameful death. Shows disdain.
 - iii. Such leaves no room for return. The thought should not even be entertained.
 - 1. We must burn all bridges we can.
 - 2. **Acts 19:19** – burning of magic books in Ephesus.
 - e. **Faith is a commitment to the future which leaves the past in the past** →
- C. Faith Dwells on the Future Hope (**vv. 9-10**)
- a. **Hebrews 11:9-10** – Abraham did not dwell in the land of promise as an owner/citizen.
 - i. **Acts 7:5** – was not given an inheritance himself, but the promise was to his progeny.
 - b. Dwelling in tents – not permanent, not luxurious, not comfortable.
 - i. Indicates being subject to the elements, change, hardship, etc.
 - ii. Nothing to establish in permanence. Nothing that truly belonged to him.
 - c. How did he do such – (**v. 10**) – waited for the spiritual city of God.
 - i. **Foundations** – i.e. permanent and eternal ones. (Contrast to dwelling in tents)
 - ii. If he dwelt on the past, he would have made himself subject to the temptation to return.

- iii. If he dwelt on merely the present, he could have lost sight of why the trials were worth it.
 - iv. He thought of the future hope and persisted in faith.
 - d. Faith fixates on the eternal future – **Matthew 6:19-21** – the heart is where your treasure is.
 - e. Faith realizes the stark contrast between the physical and spiritual – **1 Peter 1:4; 1 John 2:15-17**
 - f. Faith is strengthened in trial as it fixates on the goal – **Hebrews 12:2**
 - D. Faith Accepts and Confesses Pilgrimage (**vv. 13-14**)
 - a. **Hebrews 11:13-14** – the nature of God’s promises, and them not being received in the present order led to the realization that they weren’t living for anything to receive on this earth.
 - i. The promises to Abraham had major, and primary spiritual focus to them – seed promise of Christ.
 - ii. His focus was not on any physical component, or he would have been disappointed.
 - iii. He knew his ultimate reward was not of this realm.
 - b. Confessed – more than verbal acknowledgement.
 - i. **Hebrews 11:9** – shown in the way he lived.
 - ii. He never tried to lay down roots.
 - iii. His actions did not speak of a man with any ties to any one place, but to one who had no home in the present world.
 - c. We are strangers and pilgrims – **1 Peter 2:11-12** – such is manifested by not submitting to fleshly lusts.
 - i. We don’t conform to the world – **Romans 12:2**
 - ii. Most will think it strange – **1 Peter 4:3-4**
 - iii. However, faith looks to being at home with the Lord – **2 Corinthians 5:6-8**
 - E. God is Not Ashamed of the Faithful (**v. 16**)
 - a. God was intimately associated with them, and was not ashamed of it.
 - i. He is spirit – **John 4:24**
 - ii. His people – Abraham and company – were not fixated on the physical, but the spiritual – God was proud to be associated with such.
 - b. God wants us to be identified with Him – **1 John 3:1-3** – But in order to enjoy that blessing, we have to live a life according to who He is.
 - i. We must not blaspheme the name by which we are called – **James 2:7**
 - c. We must be willing to confess Christ in order for Him to confess us – **Matthew 10:32-33**
- II. By Faith Sarah
- A. Faith is a Growing Process (**v. 11**)
 - a. Abraham’s faith is lauded in connection with the promise of Isaac – **Romans 4:19-22**

- b. Sarah first took matters into her own hand – **Genesis 16:1-2** – convinced Abraham to use Hagar to bear a son.
 - c. After God indicated to Abraham that it would not be through Ishmael, or anyone else but a son through Sarah, she showed her doubt with laughter – **Genesis 18:9-15**
 - d. Nevertheless, Sarah is spoken of as one who was strengthened in faith as well – **Hebrews 11:11**
 - i. She overcame her doubts.
 - ii. She repented of unbelief and gave God the credit that was due Him.
 - e. Our faith must be nurtured and grown – **2 Peter 3:18** – through God’s word.
 - i. Doubts may come, but they must not be yielded to.
 - 1. Perhaps dwelling on what she heard from God led her to the realization of her foolishness in laughing.
 - 2. **Romans 4:21** – Perhaps she reached the realization that God is able to perform what He says.
 - ii. We must eradicate that doubt by turning to God with the desire to grow in faith:
 - 1. **Luke 17:5** – increase our faith.
 - 2. **Mark 9:22-23** – help my unbelief.
- B. Faith in God is Never Disappointed (**v. 12**)
- a. **Hebrews 11:12** – Abraham and Sarah had a son as God promised, and such turned into a great nation.
 - b. Whatever doubt they ever had was unwarranted. Their growth of faith, and the record of God’s faithfulness in return is recorded to erase our doubt.
 - c. We will not be ashamed putting our trust in God – **Romans 10:11**

Conclusion

1. The faith of Abraham is fundamental to our walk with God. He stands in scripture as a prime example of what God expects of His children.
2. We must measure ourselves by the faith of Abraham and seek to grow as such.
3. Also, we must never forget the fact of faith’s growth. It does not happen overnight – Sarah is an excellent example of this.