

WHY IS FAITH IMPORTANT?

Hebrews 11:1-3,8-10,13,16-36-40

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“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (v1). I guess faith here has two components. First, it is about believing that things will happen in a certain way in the future. Also, it is about believing that things have happened or are happening in a certain way even though they are not visible to us. It’s very likely that certain things only exist in the spiritual realm of the world that we can never observe them with our naked eyes.

This faith is the quality that God asks of us. “Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval” (v2). If there is a report card at the end of our life, on that report card, there will be only one subject, and that’s faith. You see, everything we do, we do out of our faith. You let your children go to school five days a week because there is a level of trust in our school system and the teachers. You let your children go to Kids Ministry this morning because there is a level of trust in our Kids ministry. There is faith that our teachers will provide good Christian, biblical teaching to your children. Our actions and life will thus testify about our faith. God, who can see our hearts, will look at our lives and see what we have done with our life. As he looks at our lives, he will ask, “Where did you put your trust?” And we are called to put our trust in God who is unseen, who often works in the realm of the unseen world. It is difficult to be a Christian because you are called to have faith in the things do you not see, like a blind person.

There are a great number of examples of people of faith listed in Hebrews 11, but I believe Abraham particularly deserves close attention. Here, in Hebrews 11, he was commended for two things: willing to go anywhere when God called and willing to offer his own son as a sacrifice when asked. Today, we will look at how Abraham was able to go anywhere when God called him. The story is found in Genesis 12. “Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you” (v1). His father, Terah, and his kindred worshipped idols and from them, Abraham was told to leave. He was told to go to the land that God would show. Now, we know exactly what that land looked like and what it meant to Israel. But, back then, Abraham didn’t have any clue of where God was taking him and what the destination would look like.

I think it’s fair to ask a question, “How could Abraham leave his father’s house and go to the place unknown”? It’s by faith. Verse 8 says, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going.” Let me give you an analogy. [A blind person walks by being led by a rope, the other end is held by a person who can see.] We may not see, but faith is like this rope. When we hold on to this rope, we can be assured that God will lead us to the right path. I was reading an article called, “A Brief History of Oakridge Presbyterian Church,” given by one of our church members. It says, “In 1955, with a view to church extension a survey was conducted in Oakridge Acres. Worship services and Sunday

School began in Riverside Public School with the Rev. Daniel Firth officiating. Nursery supervision: Mary Elizabeth and Anne McLarty, Helen Henderson. In November, the Very Rev. Dr. William Barclay provided pulpit supply. Donna, daughter of Don and Marie Mason was baptised. General Work Committee was established (including William Henderson). Bank Account opened - \$82.96." Did they know what this would become 62 years later? But they did by faith, and look where we are, where their faith brought us today.

What's even more amazing about Abraham's faith is that he did not receive the promise in his life time. Verse 13 says, "All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth." Now, we may wonder how they could live with faith when they never actually received what was promised. But, God doesn't go, "O my, what have I done? How did that slip by? I completely forgot about Abraham and now he's dead." No. Verse 14 says, "...for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, 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; indeed, he has prepared a city for them." What Abraham waited for was not in this world. God had prepared a better one for him.

Earlier I showed an analogy that our faith can lift us from the troubles of our day-to-day lives. When Abraham left his hometown by faith, from then on his faith lifted him from the earthly world, from all the things in the world that could grip us. He was in the world, but he was not of the world. So what he was waiting for was not in the world. Colossians 3:1-4 says, "So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory." This is what Abraham was after. This is what he saw by faith. When he left his home by faith, he wasn't really after the piece of earthly land. It was just the shadow of what was to come. He knew there was something far better God had prepared for him, awaiting in heaven. Revelation 21:3-4 says, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" This is why Abraham was able to be patient. This is why all people of faith were able to endure suffering, persecution and even death. This world does not add or take away anything from them anymore. Verse 38 says, "The world was not worthy of them."

(A Clip from Alpha)

What about you, people of God? His faith in Jesus Christ has lifted him from the pit, and the life he lives now has become the testimony of his faith in Jesus Christ. Friends in Christ, may God bless you with the gift of faith from our Lord Jesus Christ today and every single day. Amen.