

Text: Hebrews 11:8-12

Title: The Faith of Abraham and Sarah

Truth: God gives us more examples of how to have a good testimony.

Date/Location: August 21, 2011 at FBC

Introduction

We have learned that Christian faith is certainty of things God has promised in the future; it is conviction about things not seen; the OT believers lived by it; and by it we know that God created the universe out of nothing.

We also learned that faith demonstrates righteousness that has been previously granted by God as part of the gift of salvation; that faith pleases God when we live by it; and faith obeys God when He tells us what to do. Faith thus is essential in our worship, our walk, and our work.

All of these characteristics were shown by Abraham and his wife Sarah. Abraham is specifically called out as believing in God in key Bible passages in both testaments (Gen. 15:6, Rom 4:3-5 and Gal. 3:6-9).

Abraham received the double-guarantee promise (Hebrews 6:13). Later Scripture reflects on his exemplary faith (Neh. 9:7-8).

I. Abraham's Obedience to Move by Faith, v. 8

Genesis 12:1-9

- A. Abraham received communication from God that we call *special revelation*. God spoke to him directly (see Acts 7:2-4). Abraham obeyed the revelation by faith. He really believed it! He listened to God.
- B. He was obedient outwardly because of inward faith. "Trust and obey" go together like peanut butter and jelly or husband and wife. We have to understand that, like the chicken and egg, faith and obedience are intertwined. But, just like the chicken came first, so faith comes first. It produces obedience. Once we get over that hurdle, we can speak about faith and obedience very easily, without getting tripped up on the faith/works question.
 1. Abraham obeyed thought he land to which he was going was unseen and unproven in his personal experience. I believe the place was unseen, but the journey was not unplanned. Some believers highlight Abraham's obedience as blind and unplanned; thus we should eschew planning and take blind leaps of faith all the time. The more spontaneous or the more we cannot see, the more faith we supposedly have. But the reality is that such behavior can be just as foolish as it is supposedly faithful.

2. God never calls us to blind faith. Even Abraham had to know which direction to travel as he started his journey, and God must have told him that. Abraham must have known, then, the general direction and place, but he did not know the place like he knew his home town. The real point is that Abraham obeyed God even when he could not know everything or see everything fully to his fleshly satisfaction. Remember Hebrews 11:1—conviction about things unseen.
- C. We have received communication from God in the Bible. In our case, God speaks to us through the written Word. We should obey the revelation by faith as well.
1. A close parallel to Abraham would be if you are called into vocational ministry. You might not know exactly what the mission field will be like or how hard it will be; you might not know whether God has called you to pastor an existing church or start a new one; but you know the general job description (the Great Commission) and you know God.
 2. Less extreme is the parallel of our obedience to the Bible in its general teaching. We might not know how we will find a spouse in this small church, but we know it is faithful to the Lord and has Biblical substance. By faith, throw your concern for other things out the window and do the right thing! God will provide everything else. Maybe you have a problem at work where they are asking you to cook the books or lie to a client. You have to do the right thing by faith and let God manage the consequences.

II. Abraham's Sojourn by Faith, v. 9-10

Acts 7:5

- A. Abraham moved quite often (Gen. 12:4, 8, 10; 13:1, 18). He was a nomad, like his sons after him. The only ground he owned was a burial plot with a cave and field near Machpelah (Gen. 23:8-19).
1. He was living as a foreigner in his own land, so to speak. He knew he would receive it as an inheritance, but he did not know when he would see it. His descendants would come back after 400 years of bondage in Egypt (Acts 7:6-7).
 2. This configuration of things was not like it will be in the future when the land is fully under Israelite control and no enemy will hurt them.
- B. Abraham was waiting for a city as opposed to his nomadic life.
1. The foundations are contrasted with the tent which was not set on a foundation. The foundations indicate permanence instead of a

temporal dwelling place. The builder and maker of this permanent dwelling place is God. I believe this is a reference to the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city described in Revelation 21. It is a literal dwelling place, not just a spiritual or allegorical one. It is where the believing of all ages will be privileged to dwell in the eternal state.

2. Abraham was patient in his faith. He continued believing God even though he had to wait a long while (his whole life). Here is the promise/hope part that he did not have in hand, but he believed like Hebrews 11:1's "substance of things hoped for."
3. Abraham is still awaiting the fulfillment of this promise. We believe that he will enjoy it in the millennial kingdom and eternal state. By the way—Abraham believed the promise of Genesis 12:1-3. Do you?

C. Being a missionary would be like this—away from home country and perhaps never returning. But get this: all believers sojourn in a foreign land (the unbelieving world), as ambassadors of a foreign government, citizens of a foreign and future kingdom, subjects of the heavenly king.

III. Abraham and Sarah's Childbearing by Faith, v. 11-12 Gen 15, 16

A. The Bible is very realistic, because at this point we see a momentary lapse in faith when the promise was given. Read Gen. 18:10-15 to see Sarah's response. There was a more serious lapse of faith when she offered her servant Hagar to Abraham as a second wife (Gen. 15:3-5, 16:1-4).

1. Despite the lapses in faith, their pattern was one of faith for both Abraham and Sarah. They are for us realistic examples of faith.
2. Sometimes we stumble, but what is the characteristic of our life over time? Monday may be a bad day for faith, but every day? Every Monday? When we first face a trial? Throughout the whole trial? Sometimes in our marriage? Hopefully not all the time! Note the parable in Matthew 21:28-31. An initial response of unbelief can easily be corrected by repenting and responding with faith.

B. See Gen. 21:1-3 for fulfillment of the promise of a son. God always does "as He spoke." There have been millions of Jews throughout history. They have indeed been as numerous as the stars or as the sand on the seashore (Gen 15:5, 22:17, 26:4, 32:12).

1. Faith was an integral component in her conception and child bearing. She was in full menopause. There were no more children to be had!

IV. Applying This Truth Today

We could ask ourselves, “What would I do *if* I were called like Abraham was?” But more relevant is, “What am I doing *now* in what I *have been called* to do by the Scriptures?” It is high time to throw off any remaining unbelief as expressed in disobedience, and “get with it!” Are you:

1. believing in Jesus Christ to be saved from sin
2. being baptized as a symbol of your new life in Jesus
3. attending local church services whenever the doors are open and not otherwise providentially hindered
4. praying individually and corporately
5. reading the Bible individually and corporately
6. worshipping through song and prayer
7. evangelizing the lost
8. using your spiritual gifts in the church ministry
9. maintaining a healthy marriage
10. developing Christ-like character, including godly speech and self-control
11. teaching your children spiritual truth and being a living example to them
12. there are probably a few more things we could include in this list!

Conclusion

Do you want to know if you really believe? Look at your life and see if the evidence of obedience is there. Do you obey God even if you cannot see the outcome of things? Do you obey if you have to wait a long time to receive God’s promise? Do you obey even after you initially balk or laugh at God?

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