

Hebrews 11:8-12 “Lord, Give Us Such a Faith as Abraham!” Pentecost 12 August 7, 2016

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Grace and peace are yours from God our heavenly Father through faith in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

God's Word about faith in action is written in Hebrews 11:8-12

These are Your words heavenly Father. Sanctify us to have confidence in Your truth. Your Word truth!

Dear Christian Friends,

When we read Hebrews 11 about people of faith like Enoch, who stood up for God in ungodly times, Noah who by faith built the ark before a drop of rain fell, Moses who by faith led the complaining Israelites for 40 years; we think these people have great faith! We wish we could have faith like them. Throughout the Bible, we can see that the Lord has worked through people like us of varying backgrounds and levels of faith. Perhaps as our country gets more evil, people will look to us to point to a refuge from the storms of life. People will look for guidance that leads them from evil to God. So, prepare! And pray:

Lord, give us such a faith as Abraham!

First, what kind of a faith did Abraham have? It was a faith based on God's call and promises. We read in verse 8 *“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place ... obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.”* Abraham had been living with his extended family in Haran many miles north of the promised land. As far as we know, Abraham was an unbeliever, worshipping idols.

Yet God, by His grace, called Abraham to leave his family and his city, to travel to a foreign land. Today it might be like someone telling you, “I want you to move to Mexico in the middle of the drug cartels and do this alone! It would take an amazing faith for us to obey! God didn't force Abraham to go. Along with calling him, God gave amazing promises. He pledged that from Abraham a great nation would come, his descendents would be as many as the stars, his name would be highly honored, and from one of his descendents all nations would be blessed! (*Genesis 12:2-4, 15:6, 22:18*) It's a wonder that Abraham believed these promises because he had no children. The people of Canaan paid no attention to him. Yet, by God's power through these promises, Abraham believed, left his homeland, and followed God.

“By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.” (v.9) Usually when we talk about someone becoming an heir it is of property, like a house, furniture, or money. But, the Bible states that Abraham was an heir to God's promise. If people make promises, we can't be certain that they will be kept. But, when God makes a promise and we trust in Him, it becomes more certain than a title to a car. God never gave Abraham one piece of land during his life. His children didn't get special land grants from God either. The only land the family owned was a burial property. This is fitting because Hebrews tells us that they were nomads waiting for the time that God would take them to His permanent city. One by one as they died, they believed God had reserved a place for them in heaven and they went by God's call and promise!

If we want a faith like Abraham's, we'll be tested. *“By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered God faithful who had made the promise.”* (v. 11) What man who is 99 years old would believe he could father a child? What wife who is 89 years old would believe that she could conceive? From the time God first promised that Abraham would have a son, Abraham and Sarah waited 24 years! Thankfully God spoke His promises several times while they waited. Abraham didn't always pass the test. Once he tried to make his chief servant the heir rather than wait of his son to be conceived. Another time he listened to Sarah and took Sarah's servant as a second wife so they would have an heir through her. These were lapses of faith. When Abraham failed, God forgave him and still blessed him, because God was faithful to His promises.

God's testing can challenge our faith. Problems loom so big before us that it is hard to see God's blessings. Some must care for loved ones with pain or an incurable illness. Some experience personal conflict with others, while some fear for our nation's future. Some watch in sadness as marriages crumble. Financial concerns can strike close to home. But, Jesus assures us that He has won the victory! Faith takes its eyes off problems to focus on the cross. When we can't see where God is leading us, it's time to follow the Guide! *"By faith Abraham ... obeyed and went, though he did not know where he was going."* (v. 8)

Do we have such a faith as Abraham? If so, we should be persistent in prayer and always trust God to provide for us and work all things for good. But we give up or doubt. We wish we had trust to appreciate God's goodness. But often we don't value God's amazing grace. But, God still calls us and keeps us in the faith through His Word. Although our names are not listed in the Bible like Abraham's, we are part of the world that God loves. He had Jesus died for all sinners. We are far from having perfect faith and obedience. Page 3 Yet, we are forgiven just as Abraham was! Like Abraham, we don't know what will happen to us in the future. But, we know God who does know and has planned for our future just like for Abraham.

Second, we have Abraham's faith if we trust God's Word. He will keep His promises. Was Abraham disappointed in God? No! The promised son, Isaac, was born after 25 years! The promised land of Canaan was given to Abraham's numerous descendents after about 500 years. It took nearly 2,000 years after Abraham, but God kept His promise regarding his Seed to bless all nations. Jesus was that Seed. He had faith far beyond Abraham's. He perfectly trusted in God during His humble life as He faced hunger, family disputes, exhaustion in His busy life, and rejection by many of His own people. He perfectly obeyed God even when it led Him to suffer and die the punishment for all sins. Jesus did this to save us from eternal judgment. He fulfilled every promise that God made, except the one that He will return in glory.

God has made promises to us. He said, *"Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find..."* (Luke 11:9) By faith we bring our requests to God and trust in Him. It states, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us...."* (1 John 1:9) By faith, we confess our sins assured that God holds nothing against us. Our risen Lord said *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved."* (Mark 16:15) So by faith in Christ, we who are baptized are confident of going to heaven, just like *"Abraham was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."* (v.10)

By faith, Abraham was thankful. God provided him with money, workers, and animals. God had also kept Abraham safe as he traveled the over the land. Whenever he moved, Abraham quickly built an altar to call on the name of the LORD. Above all, he thanked God who called and made promises to him, even before he received God's blessings. There are times when we need faith to be thankful. Faith helps us see that our troubles here are temporary. But heaven has been built by God to be ours forever! What glory it will be to enter God's house and meet Abraham and so many more heroes of faith!

Will we fit in among the faithful heroes? Yes, but it's not by our works, but by Christ's work. *"God who promised is faithful."* (Hebrews 10:23) So, trust in God and pray to Him, not just to have the faith of Abraham, but to live by faith in the power of Christ. He is faithful to help us! Amen.