

“By Faith, Abraham Obeyed”

Hebrews 11:8-10

INTRO:

Whenever we come to **Hebrews 11**, we need to keep firmly before us the context of the chapter. The writer of Hebrews wrote in chapter **10:35-39** about the Hebrew believers' need of faith. *“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ‘for yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.’”* The Hebrew believers had been faithful. They had done right in very trying circumstances. They had even suffered the loss of their possessions. Now they were waiting for the blessing of God. The writer is concerned that they might lose their confidence before the blessing comes. So, he is telling them, “Keep the faith.” But what does “keeping the faith” mean? That is what **Hebrews 11** is all about.

As we pick up our study here in **vs. 8-10** we meet again the man who is the epitome of faith, Abraham. We will explore Abraham's example in three parts.

I. Faith Obeys (v. 8)

II. Faith Sacrifices (v. 8b, 9)

III. Faith Looks Forward (v. 10)

I. Faith Obeys (v. 8)

A. We read in **vs. 8** literally, *“By faith Abraham being called obeyed.”* Abraham was called and obeyed the call. We find that call in **Genesis 12** where we read of a call that Abraham received in Haran. We know more about that call from Stephen's sermon in **Acts 7:2-6**. Abraham was initially called in Ur of the Chaldees.

“And [Stephen] said, ‘Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, ‘Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you. Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him. But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress them four hundred years.’”

The call was probably repeated when Abraham's father died at a time when Abraham was fully ready to obey God. **Genesis 12:1-3** says.

“Now the Lord had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I

will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

B. Notice what this call involved. First, it involved some kind of call from idolatry to a relationship with the true and living God. We know this because of **Joshua 24:2-3**;
“And Joshua said to all the people, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.’”

Clearly, we know from this that Abraham was not always a believer in the true and living God. He had been an idolater like the other people of Ur, until somehow and in some way God in grace called him out of his idolatry to the truth. If Abraham had not first known God, he would not have responded to His call to leave everything and follow Him to the land of promise.

C. Second, it involved a turning from his old lifestyle to a new life. Abraham could not believe in God and have his life remain the same. God said, (**Genesis 12:1**)

“Get out from your country, your family, and from your father’s house.”

God was asking no little thing from Abraham. He wanted him to leave everything that was important to him behind. Leave your country. Ur was probably the most culturally advanced nation in the world at that time. He had to leave it. Leave your family (and friends). The Lord had to come before these folks that Abraham loved. Leave your father’s house. In that age, nothing was closer than blood!

D. Third, it meant investing everything in the promise of God. The promises in **Genesis 12:2-3** were amazing;

“I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

So, Abraham faced a life changing choice. If God told the truth Abraham would prosper. If God was lying, Abraham would lose everything. Abraham chose to invest with God rather than this present world.

E. What about us? Do we know anything of this kind of commitment because of our faith? Have we been called from our sin into a relationship with Jesus Christ? Do we know the Lord Jesus as the Savior and Lord of our lives? If we do, we will also know something of a call from our old lifestyle to a new life in Christ. You can’t add Jesus to your god shelf. You have to dump it all to have Him.

II. Faith Sacrifices (v. 8b, 9)

A. ***“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling***

in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise” (Hebrews 11:9). How did Abraham obey? He went out not knowing where he was going. Have you moved somewhere like this? I haven’t. Whenever we have moved, we always knew where we were going and how we were going to get there. When Abraham climbed onto his U Haul, (In Abraham’s day it was probably a camel painted orange) he had no idea what the destination was. God said, ***“You just drive, Abraham, and I’ll tell you when we get there.”*** Because of his faith, Abraham was willing to give up control of his life to God.

1. Abraham was willing to do this because, first, he believed that God was wiser and smarter than he, Abraham, was. I am convinced that sometimes our biggest problem in life is that we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. We think that we should be able to dictate to God what He ought to do with His Universe. We also think we know how God should have written His Bible. And then we think we ought to be able to tell Him what He can do with this life, which I think is mine, but which is really His. But God is much wiser than we are. We would be smart, if we just listen to Him and do what He says to do.

2. And, second, Abraham was willing to do this because he was convinced God knew the way. I never used to worry when I was young and went on trips with my parents. I always knew that they knew the way and that somehow we would get where we were going. We need to have that same confidence with God. When God is directing our lives, we need not fear. He knows the way and He will get us to the destination.

B. Not only was Abraham willing to sacrifice control of his own life and destiny. He was willing to live out his life here with less, that he might enjoy greater future blessings.

1. Abraham was willing to not possess any of the land in the present that he might have all of it in the future. He was willing to wait for God’s timing to possess the blessing.

2. Abraham also was willing to live in tents now in order that he might live in a place of supreme blessing later on. He lived out his life knowing that what we have here is not all there is. Remember what Jesus said to His disciples,

“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:2-3)

This world is not all there is, and we need to be living today in view of the world that is yet to come.

3. When the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) died they actually handed down God’s promises as their legacy to their children. That is how real these promises were to them.

III. Faith Looks Forward (v. 10)

A. We read in vs. 10,

“He waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

Notice the contrast. In the present Abraham lived in temporary tents, but he was waiting for a city which had foundations. This city is permanent. It was also built by the greatest builder of all, God Himself! Now why was Abraham willing to do all of this? He was willing to do this because his faith was focused on God Himself. Remember that we learned He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him.

B. His faith was also focused on the promises that God made. Abraham’s entire life was lived fully invested in the truth of the promises that God had made to him! He persisted in believing, holding on tenaciously to God’s Word. We need to live this way too!

Abraham’s faith is a tremendous example to us. Do we believe in the promises of God? Are we willing to let Him lead us and provide for us along the way?

How much investment do we have in God and in His Word? Is God something, a little thing, or everything to us?