

LORD, INCREASE OUR FAITH

Sermon Six – “Seeing Afar Off By Faith”

Text: Hebrews 11:8-19; Genesis 12, 13, 22

INTRODUCTION: *“Now the just shall live **by faith**.”* This is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4 – *“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: **but the just shall live by his faith.**”*

The *“just”* (*dikaiois*) means one who has been declared to be righteous because he has been made righteous by trusting in the finished work of Christ (Romans 5:1). One who is just is one who is a born-again believer in Jesus Christ. The just is one is a Christian. *“By faith”* is the only way a Christian is to live. The just should live by a continued confidence in God.

In this series on “LORD, INCREASE OUR FAITH”, we have learned that: If the *“just”* is to live by faith, the *“just”* must know what faith is. Hebrews 11 gives us both a description of faith and many demonstrations of faith.

- A. Faith is Confidence (Hebrews 11:1 – *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, . . .”*).
- B. Faith is Conviction (*“. . . the evidence of things not seen”*). It is the proof, *“evidence”* (*elegchos*); inner awareness of the reality, the conviction.
- C. Faith is Communication (vs. 2).
- D. Faith is Comprehension (vs. 3).

We have learned from Abel’s life that the **just** must **“Worship by Faith.”**

- A. **“And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering . . . But unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect.”**
- B. **The man was being judged rather than his offering. The emphasis is on each man.** Notice the verses do not read: “The Lord had respect unto *Abel’s offering*, but unto *Cain’s offering* He had not respect.” The verses read: *“And the Lord had respect unto **Abel** and to his offering: But unto **Cain** and to his offering He had not respect.”*
- C. **Abel presented his offering by faith** (Hebrews 11:4). Cain presented his offering in the flesh (Genesis 4:5).

We have also learned from Enoch’s life that a life that pleases God is a **“Walk of Faith.”**

- A. It is a Life of Faith (Genesis 5:18-24).
- B. It is a Life of Fellowship (Genesis 5:22).
- C. It is a Life of Faithfulness (Genesis 5:22).
- D. It is a Life of Fruitfulness (Hebrews 11:5).

From Noah's life we learned that Noah was a man of **Great Faith**, he had a **working faith!**

- A. Noah's Faith **Believed** God's Warning (Hebrews 11:7).
- B. Noah's Faith **Achieved** God's Work ("*... prepared an ark ...*")
- C. Noah's Faith **Perceived** God's Wrath on Man's Wickedness (Genesis 6:5, 7-8; 11-13).
- D. Noah's Faith **Received** God's Wealth (Genesis 6:9).

From Abraham's life we can also learn much about faith. Abraham's faith gave him vision to see afar off.

I. **LET'S MEET ABRAM (ABRAHAM)**

- A. **Abraham lived with his father, Terah, in Ur of the Chaldees, an important center of moon worship on the great Euphrates River.**
- B. **According to Genesis 11:28-32 Terah took Abram from Ur of the Chaldees to dwell in Haran. Like his neighbors, Abraham was a lost idolatrous pagan.**
- C. **Abraham's life from his call by God to his death consists of four periods. Each period is marked by a divine revelation from God.**
 1. **In the first period** when Abraham was about seventy years old, he and his wife Sarai, his father Terah, and his nephew Lot headed to Canaan, but his father took them to Haran and they dwelt there until after Terah's death (Genesis 11:31-32).
 - a. God called Abram (Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 7:1-3).
 - b. Abram reaches Canaan (Genesis 12:4-5).
 - c. Abram builds an altar to God (Genesis 12:7-9).
 - d. He goes to Egypt due to a famine (Genesis 12:7-20).
 - e. He returns to Canaan and worships (Genesis 13:3-4).
 - f. He separates from worldly Lot and later rescues Lot (Genesis 13:5-14:24).
 - g. He meets Melchizedek, the king of Salem and priest of the most high God (Genesis 14:17-24). (Is this person a Christophony? Notice Hebrews 7:1-8).
 2. **In the second period** God promised Abraham an heir and made a land covenant with him (Genesis 15:4-18).

- a. God gives Abram a vision and makes a covenant with him (Genesis 15:1-6, 13-18).
- b. Ishmael is born (Genesis 16:7-16).
- 3. **The third period is found** in Genesis 17-20 God established his covenant with Abraham and changes his name (Genesis 17:4-5).
 - a. At ninety years of age God changed Abram's name from "**Abram**" meaning "exalted father" to "**Abraham**" meaning "father of a multitude" (Genesis 17:1-5).
 - b. The sign of circumcision was given (Genesis 17:10-27) as a token of the covenant between God and Abraham.
 - c. Abraham is visited by angels that tell him that Sarai shall conceive and that Sodom and Gomorrah would be destroyed (Genesis 18:9-20).
 - d. Sarah is taken by Abimelech (Genesis 20:2).
 - e. Sarah conceived and bare Isaac when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 (Genesis 21:1-5).
- 4. **The events of the fourth period** of Abraham's life include:
 - a. God's testing of Abraham's faith by asking him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac (Genesis 22).
 - b. Sarah's death (Genesis 23:1-2).
 - c. Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac (Genesis 24:1-4).
 - d. Abraham died (Genesis 25:5-8).

II. **IN THIS PORTION OF SCRIPTURE THE EMPHASIS IS ON THE PROMISE OF GOD AND HIS PLANS FOR THE NATION OF ISRAEL** (Hebrews 11:9, 11, 13, 17)

A. **The nation began with the call of Abraham.**

B. **God promised Abraham and Sarah a son, but they had to wait twenty-five years before the promise was fulfilled.**

C. **Isaac became the father of Jacob and the twelve tribes of Israel came from the twelve sons of Jacob.**

III. **FROM ABRAHAM WE LEARN THAT WE WAIT BY FAITH** (Hebrews 11:8-16)

A. **A "Waiting Faith" allows us to have vision to see the reality of God's promises.**

- 1. It allows us to "**See Afar Off**".
- 2. Notice the following principles that we learn from a "*Waiting Faith*" that allows us to "**See Afar Off**".

B. **The Voice Principle**

- 1. We must hear God's voice through His Word.

2. Romans 10:17 *“So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”*

C. The Venture Principle

1. We must be willing to obey God’s voice when we hear.
2. Luke 6:46 *“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”*

D. The Values Principle

1. We must establish priorities for God, and not set out tent pegs down too deep in this world.
2. I John 2:15-17

E. The Vision Principle

1. We must keep our faith focused on God and His Word during difficult times.
2. Vision will help you to make difficult decisions.
3. Vision will help you to be willing to sacrifice, to pay the price, to see God’s will accomplished in your life.
4. Vision will give you an eternal perspective (II Corinthians 4:18).
5. Vision will help you to overcome fear and give you confident faith in God’s Word (Hebrews 13:5-6).

F. The Vigilance Principle

1. Faith will be tested.
2. Genesis 12:10; 13:1

G. The Victory Principle

1. Hebrews 11:11
2. I John 5:1-5

Hebrews 11:13 *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but **having seen them afar off**, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims of the earth.”*

Abraham was a man of great faith. His life was marked by four crises in which his faith was tested. In each case the test called for him to surrender something that was precious to him.

1. Genesis 12:1-13 He had to leave his country and kindred.
2. Genesis 13:5-11 He had to break away from his nephew, Lot, whom he loved.
3. Genesis 17:17-18 He had to give up on his own plans for Ishmael and center his hopes in the promise of the birth of Isaac.

4. Genesis 22:1-24 The supreme test of his faith was when God asked him to offer up Isaac in whom all his expectations of the fulfillment of God's promises were centered.

In this message entitled, "**Seeing Afar Off By Faith**", we have learned some lessons from the most remarkable test of and illustration of faith exhibited by any man in the Bible. Warren W. Wiersbe has said that "A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted." What can we learn from Abraham's test of faith?

1. **Expect Your Faith To Be Tested** (I Peter 1:7).
2. Many Christians have great confidence in their level of faith until it is put to the test.
 - a. I Peter 1:7 *"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; **that the trial of your faith**, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."*
 - b. I Peter 4:17 *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning **the fiery trial which is to try you**, as though some strange thing happened unto you; But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."*
 - c. James 1:1-2 *"My brethren, count it all joy **when ye fall into divers temptations**; knowing this, that the **trying of your faith** worketh patience."*
 - i. **"tried"** (*peirazo*) means "to test; to prove; to put to the test for the purpose of approving".
 - ii. **"tempt"** (*nacah*) means "to test; to prove; to try".
3. Often God tests our faith by asking us to give up not the bad things in our life, but the good things in our life.
4. **Obedience** is the true test of a great faith (I Samuel 15:22).

CONCLUSION: If we are truly saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8, 9) and according to II Corinthians 5:7 are to walk by faith (with our eyes on the Lord) not by sight (with our eyes on the world or circumstances), shouldn't you and I be a people of great faith? If what the Lord Jesus Christ said in Matthew 9:29, "*According to your faith be it unto you*" and in Mark 11:24, "*Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*", shouldn't you and I be a people of great faith?