

The Life of Faith: Abraham (Hebrews 11:8-19)

The story of Abraham spans from Genesis 11-25 and is foundational of what follows. Abraham grew up in a pagan family (Joshua 24:2) and was called by God to go to a land of God's choosing. Though there was *much failure* in the life of Abraham, the Scriptures present him as a man of faith. Why is that? The life of faith is not marked by perfection, but by perseverance. Abraham's life functions as an example of a whole life lived by faith (Heb. 11:8-19). We will observe that by God's sovereign grace, Abraham had a willing faith, waiting, and watching faith.

1. A Willing Faith

According to His perfect timing, God appeared to Abraham and made an amazing promise. In this covenant God promises Abraham land, descendants, and blessing. We need to understand that in order to act in obedience to this command of God, this would involve faith. He would have to leave his home, friends, family, and familiar surroundings. How did he respond? See Hebrews 11:8. Abraham's actions of packing up and leaving Haran and making his journey to Canaan revealed a willing faith.

2. A Waiting Faith

Abraham's life of faith didn't mean instant fulfillment. As Abraham walked the life of faith he learnt that it involved waiting and watching. That is to say, he not only had to be willing to do what God said, but he had to also be willing to wait for what God had said. He was *willing to wait for descendants*. God made Abraham a promise that he would have descendants. However, there was a huge problem. Abraham and Sarah were both very old and Sarah had been barren her whole life. Sadly, they took this problem into their own hands and tried to solve it using human wisdom. Though both Abraham and Sarah did not demonstrate trust, eventually they did and God fulfilled His promise (Heb. 11:11-12). In the end, they waited on God and what was laughing of distrust became laughter of delight when they held their son Isaac. Abraham was also *willing to wait for the Eternal City*. Abraham eventually made it to the Promised Land, however they lived in tents and were nomads. In one sense, life may have been easier if they went back to Haran or some other place. But he was willing to wait for what God has promised. For Abraham, this world was not his home, for he was just passing through. He was willing to wait for the eternal city (Heb. 11:9-10, 13-16).

3. A Watching Faith

The final lesson we learn from the life of Abraham is that he had a watching faith. That is, he expected God to do what He had promised. This was demonstrated in a situation that would have been intensely difficult. He was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac. As difficult as this would have been, we are told that he arose and went. Abraham fixed his eyes on the Lord and responded with a watching faith. He was willing and ready to offer the sacrifice with the view of watching God raise Isaac from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19). Abraham knew God promised Him many descendants and that God promised to make an everlasting covenant with Isaac and his offspring (Gen. 17:19). Sometimes things in life might not seem to work out the way we think it should, but a watching faith looks to God and trusts Him.

Group Discussion

1. Why do you think Abraham considered one of the most important OT figures?
2. Discuss the significance of what God required of Abraham when he told him to leave his family and home and go to another land.
3. Why do we find it hard to wait on God? Discuss the consequences of Abraham's impatience but also God's grace in this matter.
4. Abraham knew that this world was not his home. He was looking for the eternal city. How does the promise of a heavenly country help us to keep our faith, even when we don't see our hopes fulfilled immediately (vs. 13-16)?
5. Look up the following passages and note the importance of an eternal perspective: Colossians 3:1-4; 1 John 2:15-18; Revelation 20:11-21:3.