

7. The Faith of Abraham (Heb. 11:8-10)

God First Chooses the Family of Abram

A) Prior to this time, God has been concerned with different nations of the world

- 1) From Adam to Noah there had many different people groups – some good and some bad
- 2) Even after the flood there were the descendants of Ham's son Canaan who were corrupt

So God decided to focus on a particular line of people and preserve His chosen line through them

3) God decides to choose one man Abram (**Gen. 12:1**)

- a) Why did he pick this one man to the exclusion of others? – We're not told
- b) Was there something special about this man more so than others? – **HARDLY**

You would think that God would choose a family that was especially godly to get the chief patriarch

4) Abraham's family from Terah was anything BUT that (**11:26**)

“Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor, and **THEY SERVED OTHER GODS!**’ (Josh. 24:2)

That means that the man that God would chose Abram from an idolatrous family

5) The area that they were living was Ur of the Chaldeans (**11:28**)

This is 125 miles southeast of Babylon, south of the lower Euphrates, a place where excavations have shown that worship of the moongod Sin prevailed

6) Also consider his wife, Sarai (**11:29**)

Her name means “Princess” – She must have been a woman with a measure of social standing
She was also part of this whole idol worshipping family as well

B) You would think that God could have done better in choosing the “Royal Family” – The chosen Patriarch

- 1) We might look at this and walk away shaking our heads in unbelief that God would choose such people
- 2) But there is something about God that is above us: God's Foreknowledge
- 3) In other words, God knows what the future will hold for people

God's choice of Abram and Sarai isn't so much based on who they are NOW – But what they will become!

4) Does that mean that because God is choosing this one man that all others are excluded? – No

- a) It means that God is deciding to use this man and his descendants
- b) He would go on to establish His covenant of salvation with him
- c) But there would also be a provision made for “outsiders”
- d) They would have to believe in Abraham's God – Obey His commandments – And submit to circumcision
In effect, they would become a Jew as well

5) This mirrors the situation we have today

- a) God's chosen people are still the Jews
- b) But salvation comes to ANYONE who will come to that one chosen person in that line – Jesus
- c) Anyone can now come and believe in Jesus – Obey His commands – And submit to baptism
- d) In so doing, you are now adopted into the line of a son of Abraham!

“And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29)

II God Then Calls Abram

God issues the Call to Abram (**v. 1**)

- 1) Even though Abram was from an idolatrous family – He knew the voice of the Lord
- 2) When God speaks to you – You will know precisely who it is

This Call from God involved 3 things:

A) Part of the Call is to be Blessed By God

1) God Promises to make his name Great (v. 2)

- a) The Jewish people still revere him today
- b) Even we Christians recognize him as central in our faith
Still a preeminent figure in the New Testament

2) God Promises to Bless him personally (v. 2)

- a) Abram would develop great possessions of cattle, servants and land
- b) He would be one of the wealthiest men in the area
He would eventually have to separate from nephew Lot because they had so much stuff

3) God Promises to Make a Great Nation out of him (v. 2)

- a) His descendants would be as numerous as the stars of the sky
- b) We see this even today with those descendants being the Nation of Israel
Even the holocaust of Hitler and wars against multiple nations at the same time have been able to blot out the descendants of Abraham

In fact when Israel returned to their land in 1948 – This was the only time in history that a nation survived extinction and returned to their original land with their original language

Even several wars and repeated attacks by Islamic terror groups haven't been able to defeat them

4) God Promises to Bless every family of earth through him (v. 3)

- a) Now the blessings of God go beyond the chosen line of Abraham
- b) What God will do through him will be a blessing to everyone everywhere – at all time also
- c) This is a prediction of the final one in the chosen line – Jesus Christ the Lord
 - a) He will bring light and life to mankind
 - b) And most importantly – Salvation from sin and the wrath of God
And it will be and available to everyone – Not just those in the chosen line

These are the Blessings of the Call

B) Part of the Call is to Break with the World

1) God tells him to leave his country (v. 1)

- 2) He was living in Ur of the Chaldeans at the time – A land given to idolatry
So he must be willing to make a break from his homeland – Not an easy thing to do

3) He must also be willing to make a break with his relatives (v. 1)

- a) That would mean be willing to leave his father Terah and his brothers – Father's House
- b) So it would mean a complete break from their influence upon him

So that God could now bring him into the truth of God – **This is the challenge of the call**

C) God's Choosing comes with a call that must be answered (v. 4)

1) It's one thing for God to call and another thing for you to answer the call

2) Abraham had to obey what God told him to do

3) It was a little easier to do this because his dad died as they traveled (11:31-32) – Later

But Abram still had to make the decision to go when God called him – Had he not, then God would have to choose someone else

So what is the application today?

A) Just like Abram – The first step in God’s intervention into our lives is that God Calls You

Acts 2:39 ³⁹ “For ^athe promise is for you and your children, and for all who are ^bfar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself.”

1) It starts when you begin to think about God and where you are at with Him

- a) Are you at peace with Him – Or are you still enemies and estranged from Him?
God will get your attention and bring you to contemplate where you stand before God
- b) God does not just make you His own without a personal intervention in your life
- c) It is something that you will be involved with
Here you see the difference between God’s Choosing and God’s Call

But Just Like Abram – You have to personally answer the call

- a) If you do not answer the Call – Then you are not chosen
- b) Put another way – God’s Choosing is for anyone who will answer the call
He just knows in advance those who will

B) When you consider whom God might call – Remember Abram:

1) Your past is not crucial to God calling you and using you

- a) Even if you came from an ungodly home and had an ungodly life
- b) Even if you came from a wrong religion
God will still choose you – He will choose whosoever will

2) God’s call is not based upon your status in life

- a) There was nothing in Abram that made God choose him
- b) So God is no respecter of persons – God doesn’t just choose the brightest and the best
- c) In fact, people who are naturally endowed are frequently NOT called!

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 ²⁶ For ¹consider your ^acalling, brethren, that there were ^bnot many wise according to ²the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷ but ^aGod has chosen the foolish things of ^bthe world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of ^bthe world to shame the things which are strong, ²⁸ and the base things of ^athe world and the despised, God has chosen, ^bthe things that are not, that He might ^cnullify the things that are, ²⁹ that ^ano ¹man should boast before God.

3) To those entangled in the things of this world, there must be a definite break with the past

- a) Abram had to leave the old life the old family and the old religion
- b) This part of the call is where many people resist
- c) They want the blessings of God and all the things of the world at the same time
- d) But this is the essence of conversion – Turning away from the old and turning to God to follow Him
“forgetting those things which lie behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Phil. 4:13-14)

8. The Faith of Sarah (Heb. 11:11-12)

I. Sarah started in Unbelief

A) God had promised Abraham that a great nation would come out from him

“Now the Lord said to Abram, “And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great.” (Gen. 12:2)

1) As time went on, Sarah never had any children

So Abram told the Lord, “O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? [A Foreigner] ...since Thou hast given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.” (Gen. 15:2-3)

Abram and Sarah were trying to conceive to fulfill this promise and were unable to

2) Yet God re-assured Abram of His promise

“The Word of the Lord came to [Abram], saying, ‘This man shall not be your heir, but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.’” (Gen. 15:4)

B) Now Push comes to shove (**Gen. 16:1**)

1) Abraham is 85 and Sarah is 75

2) So Sarah comes up with an ingenious plan (16:2) – Go into the Egyptian handmaid

After all, the child would still be coming from Abraham!

So Abraham did so – And nothing but turmoil ensued!

3) Sarah despises Hagar (16:4)

4) Sarah despises Abraham (16:5) – This was her idea in the first place!!!

This is what happens when unfaithfulness enters a marriage

C) Now Push really comes to shove (17:1)

1) Abraham is 99 and Sarah is 89 – Kind of old to be having children – Don’t you think?

2) God tells Abraham that he will have a son through Sarah (17:15-16)

3) Abraham thinks its funny (17:17)

4) God Doesn’t (17:18) – **What a stunning rebuke!**

God told him that the heir was through he and Sarah

He reminds Abraham that his vain attempt at fulfilling this by the flesh was an absolute failure

This is NOT the way for faith in God to work

5) But even in spite of this – God stands true to His promise (17:19)

God NOW REPEATS His directive that Sarah will conceive – Even at her age!

II Sarah and Her Doubt

A) The Lord now appears to Abraham and Sarah in human form (18:1)

1) Some say that this was a pre-incarnate appearing of Christ – Perhaps

2) Abraham recognizes Him and the angels with Him (18:2)

3) He quickly has a meal prepared for them (18:6-8)

But all this is secondary – The Lord has come to talk TO Sarah!

B) The Lord asks where Sarah is (18:9)

1) He again announces FOR THE THIRD TIME that Sarah will conceive (18:10)

2) Abraham is 99 and Sarah is 89 (18:11)

3) Sarah laughs to herself at such a thought! (18:12)

4) The Lord rebukes Sarah for her doubt (18:13-14)

5) He asks the Crucial question in regards to faith (v. 14)

God will do what He has promised and nothing will hinder that – Do you believe this?
Do you believe that God is Almighty and He has the power to do even the seemingly impossible?

- 6) God's answer to Sarah's doubt is a rebuke (18:15)
This rebuke causes her to examine her heart (18:15)

C) Do you see the progress in Sarah's life here?

- 1) She has gone from outright denial that this could happen (with Ishmael) to laughing at the possibility to questioning the possibility to wondering about such a possibility
- 2) She isn't saying that it can't happen – Simply laughing that such a thing might take place
Remember it has been 25 years since God gave the initial promise
- 3) Did you pick up on Sarah's faith through all of this? – **That is what the writer to the Hebrews commended her for!**

You might think – What Faith?

The essence of Sarah's Faith

- 1) It is based on God's ability – Not man's
- 2) It doesn't matter what the issue is – Because nothing is impossible with God
- 3) The very essence of faith is simply to believe that God will do what He says He will according to His Word
- 4) Faith is something that God works in us that we respond to by believing and acting upon it
Faith is a gift from God – Something that HE works within us – “By grace are you saved, through faith, AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD, not of works lest any man should boast.” (Eph. 2:8-9)

Make sure that you don't miss how God did it

a) He brought all her unbelief to nought so that there was nothing to do but believe

Every time she acted in unbelief – God did something to make that not prosper

This same thing happened to a man in the New Testament who had a son who was taken by evil spirits – Jesus told him that “All things are possible to him who believes.” To which he cried out, “Lord, I do believe, help my unbelief.” (Mk. 9:23-24)

b) God did not do it overnight – But over a long period of time

It was nearly 25 years after the initial promise – And 13 years since the bout with Ishmael

To believe God for great things (like this) may take a lot of interacting with God and a lot of mistakes on your part – But God will still continue to work, as long as you don't shut Him out

Sarah and Her Faith?

A) Just as God had promised – God fulfilled (21:1)

- 1) God could have had Sarah just conceive without her faith – But God uses people – Including mothers
- 2) He did this at the appointed time (21:2) – The time that Sarah finally got to faith
- 3) This brought much laughter for Sarah and the others (21:6-7) – Meaning of Isaac

That is one end result of God dealing with faith in people – Their personal growth at seeing God fulfill His promises

CONCLUSION

“By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Therefore, also, there was born of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.” (Heb. 11:12)