

**February 5, 2012**

*The Faith of Abraham - The Power of God*  
Genesis 12:1-9

It is no coincidence today that we arrive in our study of Genesis at chapter 12 and the call of Abraham. We started our study in Genesis on January 9, 2011, exactly one year ago today. At that time, our Family Life Center was under construction, the steel being erected. We had no idea that one year later, Faith Bible Church would receive a \$500,000 gift to help pay for our new building! We had taken a step of faith, not sure of how the Lord would provide. And as He always does, He has demonstrated His power to us in a profound way so as to strengthen our faith and give Him glory!

TODAY, exactly ONE YEAR LATER, we come to Genesis 12, to learn about Abraham's great step of faith.

There are **two events** in the life of ABRAHAM that bear testimony to his faith in God. The first is here in Genesis 12 where Abram leaves his home country in obedience to the call of God. The second is in Genesis 22, where at the age of 101 Abraham obeys God and demonstrates his willingness to sacrifice his own very son. BOTH events in the last half of his life! Say what you want about the benefits of youth, but all that we know about the remarkable life of Abraham happens after his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday! I call that a productive retirement!

Abraham's life and testimony provide a powerful and clear example of the life of faith to which God calls us. Abraham shows us what it means to trust God. Neither he nor any other human lived this life of faith perfectly, other than Jesus Christ. But Abraham's faith was so strong, that the New Testament refers to him as "the man of faith" (Galatians 3:9).

Abraham teaches us that ***our faith is demonstrated through obedience.***

Abraham's obedience profoundly characterizes his life, so much so that throughout the scripture he is referred to as the "Father of Faith."

During the time of Jesus, and still today, pious Jews look to Abraham as their father in almost purely a genetic way. Jesus confronted this attitude by telling the Jews that their lives were identified with Satan, and not Abraham. They were Jews by genetic descent, but they had long departed from following after Abraham's example of faith (see John 6 and 8, especially 8:44 "you are of your father the Devil...").

31 verses in the OT refer to Abraham as "our father."

18 verses in the NT refer to Abraham as "our father," including the following:

**John 8:39** "*Abraham is our father,*" they answered. "*If you were Abraham's children,*" said Jesus, "*then you would do the things Abraham did.*"

**John 8:53–58** *"Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?" Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and keep his word. **Your father Abraham** rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." "You are not yet fifty years old," the Jews said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"*

The JEWS thought that this referred to a mere **genetic preference** from God. But ABRAHAM was their father in a **more profound way**. Abraham is the **FATHER of FAITH**.

**Romans 4:11** *"And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, **he is the father of all who believe** but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them."*

One day, GENETIC ISRAEL will also become SPIRITUAL ISRAEL once again!

Let's look more deeply at the mechanics of Abraham's faith. What were the circumstances in which Abraham trusted God?

The first thing that we notice is that **Abraham was given SPECIFICS to OBEY, but PROMISES to believe**.

There are essentially TWO COMMANDS (Genesis 12:1-2)

1. "Go from your country"
2. "Be a Blessing"

Each command is followed by a series of three blessings. The meaning of this arrangement is emphatic: God would bless Abraham if he obeyed, and God would allow him to bless others.

The phrase "and so you shall be a blessing" in verse two is actually in the same form as the command in verse one. God commanded Abram to "be a blessing," but he could only accomplish this command if he obeyed the Lord's command to "GO FORTH." There is a lesson for us to learn. God wants to use us to be a blessing to others. I think all of us want that, but we must obey the Lord's call and surrender our lives to him. We must "go forth" and follow him. When we do, he then can use us to be a blessing to others.

Follow the progression: (Genesis 12:1-3, NASB).

- 1 Now the LORD said to Abram,  
"Go forth from your country, (Command ONE)

And from your relatives (Blessing 1a)  
 And from your father's house, (Blessing 2a)  
 To the land which I will show you; (Blessing 3a)  
 2 And I will make you a great nation, (Blessing 1b)  
 And I will bless you, (Blessing 2b)  
 And make your name great; (Blessing 3b)  
 And so you shall be a blessing; (Command TWO)  
 3 And I will bless those who bless you,  
 And the one who curses you I will curse.  
 And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary summarizes these verses with the following statement:

If Abram would get out of Ur, God would do three things for him, so that he could then be a blessing in the land (the second imperative); and he had to be that blessing so that God would do three more things for him. This symmetry should not be missed, for it strengthens the meaning. Abram's calling had a purpose: his obedience would bring great blessing. (John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-), Ge 12:1-3.)

God's Instructions to Abraham were specific. They are also progressive, instructing Abraham to trust God from the context of the patriarch's broadest circle of influence (his country), to the most intimate and personal circle of influence (his father's house). Abraham was called to leave all and follow after God.

Go from your COUNTRY. God would take priority over Abraham's CULTURE.

Here is the principle of SEPARATION from our **former life**

**Ephesians 4:22** *"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;"*

**Ephesians 5:8** *"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light"*

**Galatians 4:9** *"But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?"*

**2 Corinthians 6:17** *"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."*

Go from your RELATIVES.

Here is the principle of SEPARATION from FAMILY TIES keep us from serving God.

**Matthew 10:37** *"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me"*

*I have witnessed many who trust Christ, but will not get baptized for fear of their family*

Go from your FATHER'S HOUSE.

Here is the principle of separation from FINANCIAL security, or in fact, anything in which we trust. Jesus said "you cannot serve God and money" (Matthew 6:24).

Abraham had to leave all that he previously trusted.

The results of Abraham's obedience would be the enjoyment of God's Broad Promises. I'm sure that Abraham would have loved to lean more specifics about these promises. Like us, he wanted to know the details. What land? How much? Are there obstacles? How much will it cost? Will I have a nice view? An easy life?

But God gave his man none of these reassurances. Only a broad promise that required confidence in the power of God and his goodness toward those who obey him.

"Go to a land which I will show you"

God does not give us the details!

Abraham's faith was tested in another way. ***Abraham had every earthly reason NOT to believe.***

First, there was his Old Age. Genesis 12:4 "75 years old!"

**God promised him no Inheritance.** Acts 7:5 *"He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land,*

**At the time, Abraham had no Children. This would have been the only way that the promises could be fulfilled. Abraham had no earthly way in which he could see these promises being completed. He had to trust God completely for something that he could not see.** (Acts 7:5) *"even though at that time Abraham had no child."*

**Further, God promised that there would be trouble ahead.** Acts 7:6 *"God spoke to him in this way: 'Your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.'"*

**The Limits of Faith - Abraham's faith was limited by his FEARS.** Even though Abraham obeyed, there were times that his faith faltered. This is encouraging to us, because we are often like Abraham. Like the father of the demon possessed child, we cry out to Jesus, "I do believe, Lord help my unbelief." (Mark 9:24). Here are a few of the momentary lapses in Abraham's faith. Even though he faltered, God was still patient with him and fulfilled his promises. This reminds us that the confidence that we have is not in our ability to keep God's promises, but rather in his ability to fulfill what he has promised even in spite of our failures.

He waits in HARAN until Terah dies. Acts 7:4 *"So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living."*

He journeys to EGYPT when there is famine. **Genesis 12:10-20**

He takes HAGAR to father his child. **Genesis 16 (85 years old!)**

In spite of Abraham's momentary lapses, and the moments when he trusted in his resources instead of in God's promises, God abundantly blessed Abraham, and ultimately all who believe in his descendent, the Lord Jesus Christ.

BLESSING is the result of Obedience. God cannot pour out his blessing while we are still holding onto our own efforts. Abraham saw only the beginning of God's blessings

So how can we follow the faith of Abraham? We will not hear a voice from God like Abraham did. The NT makes it clear that God is speaking in a different way today than he did in the time of the patriarchs prophets and apostles. **Hebrews 1:1-2** *"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."*

Do not despair, God's voice is not silent! In fact, he speaks to us today even more clearly than he did through the mysterious and emphatic methods of audible voices, burning bushes, and cloud and fire! We have something even more certain, more profound than those methods of revelation. We have a written revelation from God! **2 Peter 1:19-20** *"And we have the **word of the prophets made more certain**, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. " "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation."*

Do you see this? The "word of the prophets MADE MORE CERTAIN." With even greater clarity, we can know the will of God for our lives!

There is **no new revelation, simply the revealed Word of God**. Study and obey the WORD. In it, God will reveal his will for your life. If you are wondering how to demonstrate your faith in God, start by doing the things that he commands!

When you come across a decision which the Bible does not clearly address, practice these biblical principles:

Seek godly counsel

**Do not suppress a generous impulse. James 4:17** *"Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."*

**Do not violate your conscience. Romans 14:23** *"But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin."*

Walk in faith and trust God to do things you cannot see now!