

Hebrews 11:8-10
“Abraham’s faith: Deaf, dumb and blind”

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I. Introduction

The writer of Hebrews says that man's reasoning invariably misinterprets the evidence of life. He goes on to point out, that God has spoken to man basic truths about life. Without faith we struggle in a confused cycle of bewilderment, boredom and barriers. The writer has made it clear that the revelation of God centers around Jesus. Therefore, the life of faith begins with acceptance of him. Faith, is a very practical thing!

- *Faith, starts with the desire for something better.*
- *Then it moves forward with the search that what is missing is Someone and that this Someone is real all the while being invisible to our natural senses. And that this Someone will complete what we have recognized is missing!*
- *Then faith moves to an assurance that obedience to that Someone will bring us to the something better.*

The writer understood that his definition in Hebrews 11:1-3 needed “*flesh and blood examples*”, “*historical illustrations*” as the 11th chapter gives stories of men and women like us, who faced what we faced in a world like ours, yet mastered their problems and obstacles by faith. This chapter points out characteristics of faith. **Faith always anticipates, it moves toward an expected event in the future.** It was Kierkegaard that said, “*Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forward.*” **Without faith, life is a blind march into a mystery:**

- We can not know where we are going
- We do not know what is coming
- We do not see what lies ahead

Therefore, as Spanish philosopher George Santayana said we are left with the only way to avoid an uncertain future as, “*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*” And history has shown time and time again that we humans are those “*who cannot remember the past*” as we continue to “*repeat it*”! The future becomes what Winston Churchill describes Russia as “*A riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma!*” Without faith; anything can happen and all that is left is a sense of anxiety in trying to walk forward into life!

But faith believes that God has revealed something about the future; He has revealed enough for us to move forward in hope and peace. Because of faith in God: *Our anxiety about our future has been replaced by anticipation of it. Faith gives our life a goal, a purpose and as well as a destination.* We see this in Abraham. It is amazing how far Abraham saw. Abraham lived several thousand years before Christ; yet he, looked forward by faith. He believed what God had said and, looked across *over forty centuries of time* to a day according to Hebrews 11:10 when God would bring forth on earth a city with eternal foundations and life on earth would be lived after God's order. Abraham saw what John sees in the book of Revelation, a city coming down out of heaven onto earth. That is what *Abraham longed for, an earth lived after God's order,* where men would dwell together in peace, harmony, blessing, beauty and fulfillment. Because of that he was content to dwell in tents, looking for that coming.

II. Vs. 8 The Pilgrimage of Abraham's faith

Vs. 8a “*By faith Abraham*”. There is much in the life of faith of Abraham that the writer could have drawn from as an example. But he chooses to look at Abram's life before he was known as Abraham, before the promises of ancestry and blessing, back to the time he first heard from the God to leave his nation, culture and family. Genesis 12:1-3 records this story for us and Abram is the focus of Genesis from chapter 12 through chapter 25. He is mentioned 260 times in the Bible and ten of those times his name is mentioned in connection with faith. Paul wrote to the Roman's (4:13, 16) that “*the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*” Then in verses 16 Paul continues by saying; “*that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all*” Abram's life of faith is an example of how we ought to live in Christ. There are, according to the writer of Hebrews, two examples in this illustration that he wishes to make concerning Abraham and those two examples are followed by the reason why Abraham exhibited this kind of faith. You will note these two examples by the two-word phrase “By faith” and you will see the reason for this by the two-word phrase “for he”.

Vs. 8b *The Pilgrimage of Abraham's faith:* “*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.*” The first thing we read in Genesis 12:1 is that, “*The LORD had said to Abram:*” To give you a chronological time table of this; we last read of

God speaking the same way 420 years earlier in chapter 9 to Noah. Here we see God calling out to a mankind through a servant named Abram.

The Greek wording here is very exact and indicates that Abraham's immediate obedience to God's call. In fact, it literally reads, "*When Abraham was called, obeyed to go out*", which indicates that his calling and his obedience were almost simultaneous. The Greek, further indicates that Abraham was not concerned as to the nature of where the country was that he was being called too. His faith in God had displaced his worry as to where he was going. It was NOT the attractiveness of the land of Canaan that made it easy for him to leave Ur.

Though that is how the writer of Hebrews describes this saying that as soon as God said go "*Abraham started packing*"; Steven, in his message before the Sanhedrin in Acts chapter 7 said that, "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." It is here that we see something very interesting: Abram's father Terah was 70 years old when Abram was born and Abram was 75 when he departed Haran to go to Canaan, that makes Terah 145 when Abram left Haran. Based upon Steven's words in Acts chapter 7, God's call came to Abram "BEFORE he dwelt in Haran". Abram left with his father sometime after Haran (Terah's 2nd son) died and moved up from Ur near the Persian Gulf to the city of Haran (*named after Abram's brother*), which is in modern day Iraq. Steven says that Abram's departure was after his father Terah died (Acts 7:4); yet Genesis 11:32 says that Terah

dies at the age of 205. This means if you do the math that: **Terah would not die until for another 130 years!** Terah's name means "delay" and the city of Haran means "parched and barren". We can not be sure how long Abram stayed with his father in Haran but we can say that "his DELAY left him PARCHED and BARREN!" We are left with only **two conclusions based upon this evidence:**

- **Abram had two calls?** Which there is no evidence of!
- **Abram's "immediate obedience to God's call "took longer than what we would normally call "immediate obedience"!"** I bring this up as this story is the one the author choses to illustrate Abraham's faith. And it seems to suggest that God "recognizes the heart above the action" with regards to "Abraham's immediate obedience to God's call."

Notice the threefold call to Abram

This is further illustrated as we examine the threefold call to Abram in the words in Genesis 12:1. The words "Get out" are literally "Go for yourself" which implies that God's call of separation was intended to BENEFIT Abram! I mention this as an **application point** to our examination of Abram's faith as, **to often we see God's call separating us as a penalty upon our freedom instead a pathway to blessing!** Abram teaches us that, "God's way is the best way; leaving the world is the surest way to be blessed." In Genesis 12:3 we see both:

- A. There is a **threefold progression of separation FROM the things of the world**
- B. And a **threefold blessing to what God calls Abram TOO.**

The point for us is that God never calls away from something that He does not call us to something better. The fact is as Jesus said in John 12:24 "unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."

Threefold progression of separation FROM the things of the world:

1. "Out of your country" **National:** This was the place of Abram's birth it was his national identity! As this relates to us: Our call is NOT to be American Christians it is to be **Christian Americans!** Abram's identity was to be found in his faith in the Lord not in what or how they worshipped their god or gods. We must be aware of this danger that seeks to bend our faith in Christ into our culture instead of bending submitting our life into the word of God.
2. "From your family" **Cultural:** God's call included being called away from the culture that made up the area in which Abram was from. There are a great many things that are cultural expressions from where we are from. Now not all of these are bad but not all fit with in the confines of Christianity.
3. "And from your father's house" **Family:** He was called ought of his family as well. I believe this has to do with what his chief affection was. Jesus said in Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." Jesus used the word "**HATE**" to show the comparison of how much greater our love for Him ought to be compared with our love of our

families. There can be only one on the throne of our heart and it is only when He is there that we can love our nation, culture and families the way He has called us too.

III. Vs. 9 The patience of Abraham's faith

Vs. 9 The patience of Abraham's faith: *“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..”* The word “*dwelt*” in the Greek means to “*dwelt beside or among*” and indicates “*a foreigner dwelling in a state with out rights or citizenship*”. **Abraham's faith inspired him to endure patiently in an unsettled life, because he was assured of a permanent home in the future!** Here the emphasis is not upon his pilgrimage but upon Abraham's patience. And this goes into explain perhaps the delay in “**Abraham's immediate obedience to God's call.**” As it was producing patience in his life. We pick up the story in Genesis 12:2-3 where we see the words, “*I will..., make you..., bless you..., make your..., you shall be.*” These words are all promises of God's covenant and we note that they all proceed everything else and tell us that they were not going to be based upon God's grace and NOT what Abram may or may not be. Paul reminds Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:13 “*If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*”

Threefold blessing to what God calls Abram TOO:

1. “*I will make you a great nation*” **Nation**: God calls him out of a nation and in so doing calls him to become a great nation. The nation Abram came out of was idolatrous but God was promising to make from Abram's obedience a nation that would trust only the true God.
2. “*I will bless you*” **Culture**: **The culture was a CURSE now it would be a CURE.** All that made up society that was sick would become that which would heal. James 2:23 comments about Abram by saying, “*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God.*” God's promise to Abram started a whole new culture and identity known as “*friends of God*”!
3. “*And make your name great*” **Family**: Abram had been part of a family now he was to be the head of a new family, the family of faith. Because of this we see that both Jew and gentile look to Abram as our father. He left his father's

name, Abram means “*exalted father*”, and God will give him a new name Abraham “*father of a multitude*”.

IV. Vs. 10 The reason for Abraham’s faith

Vs. 10 **The reason for Abraham’s faith**: “*for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*” The secret of Abraham’s patience was in the hope of the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise. He understood that even if he possessed the land of Canaan in his earthly life time, it was not the ultimate eternal fulfillment of God’s promise. Abraham’s eyes were the eternal NOT the temporal. He wasn’t just looking for a city that had “foundations” but one that had specific foundations: One whose architect was God and whose builder was God. And because of this based upon Genesis 12:2b-3 Abram’s faith in God was a threefold blessing:

1. “*And you shall be a blessing*” **Nation**: **Abram’s new nation he was NOT just to BE the OBJECT of God’s blessing he was to be the INSTRUMENT of it as well.** *Abram’s life of faith is an example as those who are blessed will bless others.*
2. “*I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you*” **Culture**: Abram’s cause was going to be the Lord’s cause so how ever the world responded to Abram was either going to be a blessing to them or a woe.
3. “*And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*” **Family**: Gal 3:9 says, “*So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.*” We are now of the same family of faith as Abram was.

To devote a whole month to the Lord is one thing because we know that there is a time limit to it but in Abraham we see that his faith was month after month year after year.

Here we learn by Abraham’s example that **True faith is deaf to doubt, dumb to discouragement, and blind to impossibility!** No matter what our senses indicates our faith rests on God’s promises.