

Title: The Heavenly City (Abraham - Part I)

Text: Hebrews 11:8-10

Will you take your Bibles, please, and turn to Hebrews chapter 11. Hebrews chapter 11 beginning with Verse 8 and we will read through Vs 10. We want to continue our study of the great examples of Faith. There are notes in your bulletin which are there for you to use as we study the Word of God.

*And tonight, we come to*  
~~Hebrews~~ chapter 11 beginning with Vs 8 as we enter now the example of Abraham. Abraham is the fourth person brought to our attention as a example for us to follow and to gain some insight as to the meaning of faith. It seems to me that when we are faced with something that doesn't seem possible, one learns what kind of faith ~~we~~ <sup>we</sup> really have.

It is easy to believe something that you have always seen happen. But when something comes to you that ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> different then you have ever experienced before, seemingly from the human point of view, almost impossible, it is at that point that you learn what kind of faith you have.

And again I remind you that each of these men, in Hebrews 11, did something An act which proved that they had ~~the real~~ ~~faith of the Bible~~. It wasn't just whisling in the dark. Or, hoping that something was so when they really didn't believe it ~~inside~~. But it was real faith...real confidence..real assurance that it would really happen.

Now, I don't know what it is in your life. Sometimes it is a person that we have been praying for, that appear to be hositle to the faith of Jesus Christ. And it doesn't seem to be any hope from a human point of view that that person will ever respond. At that point we see what our faith is like.

Maybe it is something that you know needs to be accomplished in your life. Maybe it is a decision that you know needs to be made. Maybe something has come to you that is testing you, as you have never been tested before, and you don't have any past or experience to help you decide what to do. At that moment you learn what faith and confidence in God is all about.

Faith, really, is believeing in God's promises because of God. Not because of you. So often we think to believe something that God has promised, we *must* make deals with God.

God if I go to church 13 weeks in a row, you surely will do this, right?  
 Or, God I will do anything you want me to do, provided that you will do this.  
 That is not faith. That is called making deals. No faith is believing that  
 God will do what He promised because of who He is. Not because of what you do.  
 You see, God's promises are based on God. His faithfulness and His power.  
 And God wants us to trust Him. Not ourselves.

So, let's read this...Hebrews 11 vs 8...(Read Vs 8-10)

Will you join with me for a moment of prayer

Father, we pray that in this time together you would speak to our hearts  
 about faith. About responding to what you have promised. About responding to  
 the call that you have given to us. And Father I pray that each person would  
 be strengthened ~~today~~ <sup>tonight</sup>. And especially those who are not sure about their  
 relationship with you. Lord, help them to see that it is by faith that we are  
 saved and we become christians. And that salvation is not by our own efforts,  
 but by faith in what you have already done for us through the cross of Jesus  
 Christ. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, our saviour...Amen.

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I don't know of any section in Hebrews 11 that challenges me anymore than  
 this example of Abraham. Because I am not sure that if I were in the same spot  
 as Abraham that I would be able to do what Abraham did. Therefore, he is a  
 great challenge to my life. ~~And I would like to example that.~~ <sup>Let me explain</sup>

When God called Abraham he lived in Ur of the Chaldees which is down by  
 the Persian Gulf.

Now, just ~~count~~ <sup>counting</sup> the miles that this man had to walk to the land of Canaan  
 is over 600 miles. ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup>, he has never been there before. He has never seen it.  
 He never even knew that it existed. And God Called him. God did not even name  
 the land. He called him and said to go to a land that I will show you.

Now, there is no means of travel ~~except~~ <sup>except</sup> to walk. And ~~he~~ <sup>Gulf</sup> ask him to leave  
 his family, his home land, everything that he knew. And to go to a place that  
 he had no knowledge of.

Now, ~~remember~~ that in this day and age because of mass communication we all, no matter what place we might be called to, have some knowledge of it. Abraham had no knowledge of anything. He did not know where he was going. God never even identified the place.

Plus God continued to test him all of his life. and according to this passage he never saw the fulfillment of God's promise.

I don't know if I could do that. I don't know that <sup>d</sup> could stay in a place not knowing the fulfillment of God's promise. Yet, continuing to trust Him. And continuing to believe that He would show me.

And then to die, as the text says of Abraham, to die never having seen it. And yet dying believing that God would be faithful to what He promised.

I tell you, this is an amazing story when you get a whole of the background.

( ) Now, we are going to look at the example of Abraham in <sup>one way</sup> several ways.

(1) <sup>That is</sup> First of all, in his obedience to God's call. Verses 8 to 10. And there are four things that I believe characterize that obedience that might help you as you examine God's call on your own life. What He wants you to do. And it requires obedience. Four things, I believe, characterize that obedience.

(1) In Vs 8 we are told that by faith Abraham when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance, and he went out, not knowing where he was going."

So <sup>First This</sup> The first that I want you to notice about his obedience to God's call was that his decision was made on God's word alone. He had no other evidence. The Bible simply says that he was called to go out to a place. God spoke to him directly. Just as he spoke directly to Able. And revealed the better sacrifice, Vs 4. Just as He spoke directly to Enoch in Vs 5 and 6 and gave him revelation about the flood. Just as he spoke to Noah, directly, Vs 7. They had no other evidence. So, also, God spoke directly to Abraham. He had no other evidence. The revelation of God's Word. He made a decision on God's Word alone.

So, many times I want to make a decision based on what I think is important. Advise that I receive from friends or family. I look at what it cost..where it is located and what is involved. THAT IS WHAT WE WANT TO KNOW.

But, I notice that Abraham made a decision and obeyed God on the bases of what God's Word alone said.

Now, if you want to know the will of God on anything, I don't care if it is a decision you have to make this week, if you want to know the will of God, the primary place to know God's will is in His Word. It is to study that book until you have clear direction.

You say, "Well, what if that book does not tell me what to do?" Dear friends be very careful about that. Because a lot of people who say that are not really studying the book. They don't know what the book says about what they ~~are~~<sup>are</sup> trying to do. Most often you do <sup>NOT</sup> know what to do because you <sup>do NOT</sup> know the principle.

Like in business making decisions. You would be amazed about how often this book talks about business. You would know what to do, if you studied that book.

But, let's suppose that there is a circumstance which the Bible says nothing about. Now, what should you do? Do you know what the Bible tells you to do? When God has not directly revealed any principle at all. It tells you ..do not do anything. It tells you to wait on the Lord.

And yet what do we do. We go ahead without having clear direction from God's Word. And that is why we get ourselves into trouble. Abraham's decision was based on God's Word alone. He had no other evidence. Far less than any of us would have in our day.

Now, there are three things that I want to share with you about that decision. And they are all found in Vs 8.

(1) One is the strength of that call was evidenced by his constant repetition. The little phrase "he was called" literally means "he was being called" continually. Constantly called.

Now, you can read about the call of Abraham in Genesis 12. But, God repeated that call throughout the book of Genesis. And from what this verse teaches us, God repeated that call several times.

You know, I believe that Abraham had the same problem that we do. We need to continue to renew our minds in the Word of God. You can read something and realize that that says something about the decision that I need to make.

But it doesn't soak in. You have to come back and read it again. You have got to make sure that you really understand that principle. And it pours into your life so that it now controls you. And the decisions you make. Renewing your mind. God continued to call Abraham. He continued to give him that revelation. And we also are instructed in the Word to renew our minds daily. That the inward man can be continuously renewed...day by day..even though the outward man maybe decaying.

(2 ) The second thing about that decision according to Vs 8 is that the submission of his life was to what God said. Not to what others told him.

The little phrase "obeyed" is dependent upon the phrase "he was called." He was continuously called by God and then he obeyed. The word "obeyed" indicates "submission." It is the same word God used when he said to children "obey your parents." It comes from two words. One means "to hear." And a preposition meaning "under." It means "to listen under." And it indicates a chain of command. In other words, the authority was God. And Abraham when he made his decision realized that he must submit to what God said. Not to what others would say. There

There is no question in my mind that his family was not excited about that decision. There is no question in my mind that Abraham faced opposition.

And so do many of us. But submission..as to who we are going to submit to..who we are going to listen to..Often we go to a hundred people in order to have assurance or confidence that what we are doing is right. Yet, real submission in obeying God's call and proving that we have faith is submitting to what God says in his word no matter how many people tell us it is not the truth. That is a very important principle of faith.

And by the way, when it says that he obeyed it is in a tense which means "at a moment of time." Again, each one of these men proved their faith by an action. Now, how did Abraham obey God when he heard the revelation?

If you go back to Genesis 12 you will find out how. In Vs 4, it says that he picked up his family and left. He left his home land. Proving that he believed what God said. He again demonstrated that he had true faith.

And I say that for many of us when we say we have faith, but we have not yet acted upon what we know God says, proves that we really do not have faith. Wishfull thinking, maybe. Maybe intellectual agreement. But we have not proven that we have faith. Until we act upon what we know God says.

If there is a decision that you need to make go to the word of God. Find out the principles. Maybe there is something you are violating. Maybe there is something that is wrong. And if God's Word shows you it is wrong, the moment you act and correct it is the moment you prove that you have faith. That God's Word is right and you are not.

(3 ) The third thing that strick me about this decision that he made on the bases of God's Word was that the security was not bases on any previous knowledge. The last phrase of Vs 8 says that "he went out not knowing where he was going."

His security, when he made this decision, was not based on any previous knowledge. Boy, when I look at that I realize how many decisions I make must be based on previous knowledge and experience or I don't feel assurance in making the decision. But, yet, the Bible teaches that when he knew clearly what God had said, his whole security in making that decision was not based on any previous knowledge. But on what God alone had said. WHAT A TREMENDOUS CHALLENGE FOR OUR LIVES.

(2 ) Now, not only this decision reflects upon the kind of Obedience he had to God's call, but their is a second area that really stands out in Vs 9. And that is that his dwelling in Canaan was a continuing test to his faith.

Now, you would think that after Abraham had come six hundred miles, he has responded to what God said. ~~His~~ <sup>He</sup> has left his home land. He is coming now to the land of Canaan. You would think that he would think, at least, "Well, hay, I am here now. The place of God's calling. God's wonderful peace will be in my heart. I will know that this is the place of God's blessing."

On the contrary. His dwelling in Canaan was a constant test to his faith. And you know, I find that is so true. When you are in the will of God, often, God is testing your faith. As to whether you are going to trust him or your *Circumstance.*

Are you trusting God. It was a continually test. And I believe in two areas.

(1 ) One, as to his possessions and property. According to Vs 9 "By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in ~~tests~~ <sup>Tents</sup> with Isaac and Jacob, fellow-heirs of the same promise.:"

Now, they were there. But they didn't own anything. They lived in tents. Did you know that Abraham had to make a deal to just buy a burial plot for his wife Sarah? And this was in the land that God said He would give to him. This man, all of his life, failed to see the fulfillment of God's promise. But he continued to believe that God was going to give it to him. Some how God was going to give it to him. As a matter of fact, the very dimensions of that land, Israel today, does not even own. But, the Bible still says that God is going to give it to them. Every last foot of that property. because a part of the glorious promise of God to Israel was the land. A land that they would have. And the dimensions of that land was given in the promise to Abraham. This is recorded in Genesis 23.

(2 ) And there is a second area that stricks me about his dwelling in the land of Canaan being a constant test. And that concerned his permanence in the land. He was never settled permanently.

Now, as I check back through the Genesis according Abraham lived in four different places: Shechem, Bethel, Hebron, and Beersheba.

But every time he dwelt in a temporary dwelling...a tent. He never had any permanent resident.

And in Vs 9 there is a neat little study that I would like to draw to your attention. And this will be a blessing for you if you get awholed of it.

(1 ) First of all the word "alien." This word could be translated "to live as a stranger." The word means "to dwell beside." Or, "a long side of." And it indicates "one who is not dwelling permanently, but one who is there as a temporary resident."

Now, according to the Bible Abraham was a temporary resident in the land of promise.

Now, when you come down to the phrase "dwelling in tents" you find that this is a play on the word "Alien." A root word "dwelling" and the root word "alien" are one and the same. They just change a preposition. In the first case it means "to dwell along side of". Meaning you are never permanently there. The next word "dwell" means "to dwell down, or to settle down permanently." But the way he settled down permanently was in a tent.

Thus, the point is a play on words. He had no permanence in the land. The only permanence he had was a tent. And he settled down permanently all his life in a tent. Which is not permanent.

And this reminds me of what Paul said in Philippians chapter 1, when he said "I am in a bind between two things. Having a desire to depart and be with Christ, or to remain in the flesh because of you."

Paul was in a bind. He loved to share the Gospel. But he wanted to go home to be with the Lord. And when Paul used the word "depart", the original word means "to pull up the staks of a tent and move on." You see, Paul who made tents also knew what it was like, as a believer, to be in this world that was not really his home. It was like being a tent dweller. And when he talked about going home to be the Lord, it was like pulling up the stakes of a tent. And going home. That is what the point is here in hebrews. Abraham lived in a tent his whole life. Do you know why he could do that? Do you know why his whole life was so temporary? Because his eyes and his goal was set on something beyond this life. And that is the point of this passage.

Abraham was looking for a heavenly city. He wasn't just interested in that land. He was looking for a heavenly city. He had eternal values in view.

The song writer says.. "This world is not my home. I am just passing through."

But, dear friends, let's be honest. Many of us get so tied into a permanent place..our home...our job...our friends. And some times I wonder if God wanted us to go to another location...to place us in another geographic location...WE WOULD BE WILKLING TO GO?

Some times we fix ourselves so deeply into the things of this life, that we cannot comprehend that we are merely tent dwellers. And that we should be ready to go home at any moment.



Many of us believe that this world is our home. And we forget that eternity is where we are headed. We are going to a heavenly city.

Dear friends, we would be a lot more useful to the Lord, if we saw the temporary nature of our life here.

James chapter 4 says "what is your life. It is just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away."

Don't ever get so fixed, that you cannot get up and move to where ever God wants you to go. Whether that is mentally, emotionally, or physically.

Dear friends, this is a very important principle concernig discipleship. (3) The third thing about his obedince was that his desire was for a heavenly city. Vs 10 tells us that. His desire was for a heavenly city. "For he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

You know, it struck me, the foundation in contrast to the tent. <sup>Vs 10</sup> Foundation indicates what you do to build a home. A permanent structure. And what a beautiful contrast. There are those who build that house believing that they are going to stay in that house most of their life. They never change. They never move much.

And next to it are those who know they are going to move. They will move with the seasons. They move where there is better feed for their livestock. The tent dweller and the one who builds a permanent structure.

And in Vs 10 we have a play on Vs 9. This city has a foundation which suggest permanence. Where as the tent suggest a temporaary home.

Also, in Vs 10 it says that "he was looking for". It means "to recieve out from." It means that something is out there that I am going to receive. And I am looking for it. I am reaching out for it.

So, what was it that <sup>he</sup> was looking for? Vs 10 tells us a "city. It really says in the Greek "THE CITY." The particular city. That has a permanent foundation. Whose builder and maker is God.

I would like you to turn to Hebrews chapter 12 verse 22. The writer of Hebdrews refers to this particular city. <sup>Hebrews</sup> Chapter 12 verse 22 says.. "But you have come to Mt. Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly

God Jerusalem

That is speaking about something in heaven. <sup>and he</sup> <sup>it</sup> ~~is~~ calls "the city of the living God."

Chapter 13 of Hebrews verse 14 says "For here" meaning in this life. "we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come."

There is one coming but it is not here on the earth.

~~the book of Galatians. Galatians chapter 4 verse 26... Paul writes and gives the distinction between the~~

Turn please to Revelation chapter 21. Revelation 21 verse 2..."And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying (And I like this) saying, 'Behold the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be among them.'

And then we have these beautiful descriptions ...Then in Vs 10 we read: "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." And then it goes on to describe it in great detail. It is tremendous. And its beauty is beyond description.

Now, back to Hebrews 11. Abraham, according to the Bible, was not simply looking for the land of Canaan. He was looking for something else.

And here is the principle that I would like to share with you. Dear friends, if your eyes are on the fulfillment of God's promise, here on earth, and you do not have your eyes fixed on what you are going to receive in heaven, you will not demonstrate FAITH in a time of crises...NEVER....

Do you know why people give up...burn out...why they cannot have faith in a time of pressure and crisis? Because their whole value system is related only to this world. Not to heaven. And so a little pressure comes in the area of their value system...something goes wrong...they have a financial setback...or what have you...and they can't demonstrate faith and confidence in God. WHY?..Because their value system is here, rather than in heaven.

~~BOOK OF REVELATION TWO~~

And that, dear friends, is the principle behind what the Bible tells us in the example of Abraham. The reason Abraham could go his whole life never having seen the fulfillment was because he was seeking a heavenly city. It was not just something on earth. It was something he ~~knew~~<sup>knew</sup> was coming.

Are we also looking for that?

(4) The fourth thing about his obedience is found in the last phrase of Vs10.

"Whose architect and builder is God."

¢ This shows me that his dependence was on God and God alone. He obeyed because he knew that God was going to build this city. And God, because of who he is, would really bring it to pass. He was depending upon God who is the architect and builder. You see, Abraham's trust was in God. Not in what he could do to bring things to pass. And then calling that faith. ..NO WAY... When faith is working you are depending upon God to do what ~~he~~<sup>God</sup> says He will do.

And dear friends, that is a beautiful thing because you can trust and rest in the Lord. ....

Shall we close in prayer