

The faith of Abraham – Hebrews 11:8-10 Read Gen 12:1-9; Heb. 11:1, 8-16 (NKJV)

Introduction

Abraham is an important man in the Bible.

He is the ancestor (forefather) of the Israelites (the Jews).

He is the ancestor of Jesus Christ.

He is also *my* ancestor. Not in a physical way; but in a spiritual way.

Christians may think of him as Father Abraham.

Because believers share in the faith of Abraham. That is a stronger bond than blood and family.

The Bible teaches this clearly (Gal. 3:7): “*It is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.*”

Theme

The faith of Father Abraham.

1. Abraham’s calling
2. Abraham’s faith
3. Abraham’s hope

1. Abraham’s calling

Abraham lived about 4200 years ago.

He grew up in what is now called Iraq. Later his family moved to Haran (Syria).

He did not know the true God. Like his neighbors, he served many false gods.

Abraham and his family were rich. He had no reason to move away.

Then, one day, the LORD spoke to Abraham.

We don’t know how. Perhaps it was a dream. Perhaps it was an angel speaking.

The LORD spoke to Abraham and said: “Get up and leave. Travel south. I will tell you when you get there.”

Did Abraham know who the LORD was? Maybe a little; maybe nothing at all.

But now this God speaks to him clearly. And this God calls him to change his life. Completely.

From a prosperous 兴旺 life to a life of uncertainty.

From a friendly village to a hostile land.

From the known and familiar to the unknown and uncertain.

The LORD told Abraham more. He gave three promises: *blessing, offspring* 后裔, *land*.

“Go, Abraham, and I will give you a great *blessing*.”

God promised to care for Abraham and his family.

The LORD would go with him and protect him.

God would even make Abraham himself to be a blessing for those who lived around him.

“Go, Abraham, and I will give you a great *offspring*.” That is, many children and grandchildren.

This must have been hard to believe. Abraham and his wife, Sarah, had no children and were very old.

Even one child seemed impossible? How then could they have a great offspring?

But the LORD promised that Abraham’s family would be a large nation.

Like the stars in the sky, like grains of sand on the beach—that many.

“Go, Abraham, and I will give you this *land*.”

Abraham was going to move to Canaan (what we now call Israel).

Many other nations lived in that land. Abraham did not own even one acre there.

But the LORD promised to give him the entire land. How?

Blessing, offspring, land—these are great promises. For the future.

But when God called him, Abraham did not have any of these.

God wanted him to leave everything he had, in exchange for promises.

If you were Abraham, would you listen to that call?

Would you have the courage to obey and go?
Not knowing where you would end up?
Not knowing what would happen?
Not knowing anything, except promises from the LORD?

2. Abraham's faith

Abraham listened. He went.
“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.” (Heb. 11:8)
Abraham went.
He decided to follow the instructions of the LORD.
He obeyed the God who called him, even though he barely knew him.
He trusted that this God would fulfill his promises, even though he saw nothing yet.
Abraham believed. He had faith. “*By faith* Abraham obeyed...”

Faith is *trust* 信靠.

Faith is being sure of something you hope for, of something you cannot see. (Heb. 11:1.)
Without faith, Abraham would have stayed in a land he knew. But with faith, he moved to a foreign land.
Without faith, Abraham would have kept his business and position in society, in Haran. But with faith, he left everything behind for something better.
Without faith, Abraham would have kept worshipping his idols. But with faith, he gave up his old religion and began following the LORD.

Abraham had faith. Therefore he was ready to lose everything now, hoping and trusting that he would get something better later.

And the LORD loved to see this faith.

Because of Abraham's faith, the LORD viewed him as a *righteous* man, even as a *friend*.
“Abraham believed, and it is was accounted to him for righteousness.”

Keeping the faith was not easy for Abraham.

He kept traveling for years, and did not find a home.

He faced famine. He fought against enemies.

The LORD spoke to him, but not often. Sometimes he had to wait for years.

But he trusted the LORD anyway.

“Abraham believed, and it is was accounted to him for righteousness.”

Christian believers are not very different from Abraham.

The Lord Jesus calls us to follow him, even when it is difficult.

He calls us to trust him, even when everything is against us.

He calls us to trust him, even when everybody mocks us and shuns us.

It is easy to give up. That is why Hebrews 11 was written to Christians.

That is why 10:35 encourages us:

Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

For you have need of endurance 忍耐,

so that after you have done the will of God you may receive the promised.

Abraham had this endurance.

Pray to the LORD that his Holy Spirit may give you the same endurance.

3. Abraham's hope

During his life, Abraham had seen many promises fulfilled. The LORD proved to be true and faithful, the only true God who does what he says and blesses his people.

But Abraham did not see every promise fulfilled.

His family was still a small family. He owned only one plot of ground in Canaan.

Until his death, Abraham needed faith: being sure of things he could not yet see.

As Heb. 11:9 says, the land where he lived was still a *foreign* land. He had no house but lived in *tents*. When he died he passed on to his son Isaac a *promise* of more to come.

What did Abraham look for?

Our text says: "He waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (11:10)

Abraham looked for a true home, for true rest with the LORD.

Abraham's children, the Israelites, moved into the land of Canaan.

They built houses. They built the city of Jerusalem, with its palaces and temples.

The LORD dwelled in that city.

But even there they did not find the promised rest.

Because Abraham's children did not have the faith of Abraham.

Because their sin always corrupted their good intentions.

As we read on in the Bible, we see that the Promised Land was lost.

Abraham's children became unbelievers. They were no longer a blessing to the world.

But then, in God's time of grace, another child was born in the family of Abraham.

His name was Jesus. He saved his people from all their sins.

The Bible tells us that he was *the* offspring, the great Son of Abraham.

Because his faith was perfect. His faith was greater than that of Abraham himself.

Jesus Christ, filled with the Spirit of God, brought rest for his people.

Jesus Christ, filled with the Spirit of God, brought blessing to the world.

Jesus Christ, filled with the Spirit of God, brought God's kingdom to the earth.

This Jesus laid the foundations of a greater, better temple.

That temple are we, the church of God.

And that temple will shine in all its beauty when Jesus Christ returns.

Abraham did not know Jesus Christ. Only in faith he could look forward.

We do know Jesus and what he has done. Our faith has a much stronger foundation 根基.

We have all the more reason to look forward to the heavenly city.

Conclusion

For us it is important to know about Abraham's faith. It is an example for us.

The Bible calls Christian believers sons of Abraham, and says that we have the same faith.

The LORD *calls* us, like he called Abraham. He tells us to leave our false religion, our comfortable place in the world, our commitments to wrong friends, our addictions 成癮 to sin. The LORD calls us to follow Jesus Christ instead, into his Kingdom.

The LORD *promises* us, like he promised Abraham, to bless us and our families. Even if we do not see it yet, he will give us the best life possible. We have that life now already, through the Spirit of Jesus Christ. We will have that life completely when the Lord returns.

And the LORD wants us to *listen* and *obey*, in faith. He loves to see us following him, leaving our old life and entering a new life. He loves to see us grow in holiness and grace. He loves to hear our worship and praise and prayers in Jesus' name. He loves it, when our lives become more and more like that of Jesus Christ, the great Son of Abraham.

In Jesus, we have the blessing of Abraham for the world.

In Jesus, we too become offspring of Abraham, children by faith.

In Jesus, we inherit not just the Promised Land, but the New Earth and peace with God.