

Strapped In or Falling Fast?

Gen. 11: 26 -12:9

INTRODUCTION: There is no more important and relevant question for us to answer than – what is the nature of saving faith?

- It was misdirected faith that caused **death**. Eve **believed** the word of Satan over the word of God.
- It is only faith that can bring **life**— For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever **believes** in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

There is no more important and relevant question for us to answer than – what is the nature of saving faith?

In answering that question, scripture takes a number of different approaches.

1. The **Systematic** Approach – This is when a great teacher like the Apostle Paul goes into great detail and in great length explains the nature of faith in theological terms.
2. The **Parabolic** Approach – This is where a teacher uses an earthly example with a heavenly/divine meaning. For example, Jesus said faith is like a mustard
3. But the Primary way the bible teaches us about the nature of faith is through **ARCHETYPES**. An Archetype is a classic example. When God is teaching us about faith, most of the time, he points to a man.

The Key Archetype is a man named Abram, later Abraham (don't let the name change through, Abram means dad, Abraham means big daddy) – Who is called the Father of Faith.

- The bulk of Genesis is about Joseph; remember, Moses is the human author and he is wanting the Jews to understand how they ended up on Egypt in the first place; however, in the New Testament, Joseph is only mentioned *six times*, and Daniel, a major prophet, is only mentioned one time in the New Testament. Compare that to Abraham, Abraham is mentioned over 60 times in the New Testament and is central to the development of New Testament theology.
- You get only 17 words into the New Testament, and Abraham's name has already been mentioned twice.
- No figure in the entire bible, except for Jesus, carries more prominence than the person of Abraham.
- The world's three major religions – Christianity, Judaism, and Islam all trace their roots back to Father Abraham.

And it is Abraham that God consistently points us to when teaching us about real faith.

Real faith – the very fact that I said Real faith points to the fact that there is another kind. There is false faith.

**There is a faith that is much like a placebo.
It holds the form of a cure, without the potency thereof.**

And to be quite honest, the Pastor lives with the constant fear that a number of his congregation may be living in false faith, empty hope. **A Study of the life of Abraham should serve to reveal that to you.**

CONTEXT: The first 11 Chapters of Genesis chronicle the downward spiral of humanity.

- Adam counted the word of Satan as more legitimate than the Word of the Lord and took the forbidden fruit.
- Adam sowed the wind and reaped a hurricane – Adam took fruit, Cain took a life.
- Then comes Lamech in Genesis 4. He is the classic chauvinist. He takes multiple wives, he kills a child who stuck him, and murders a man.
- Some think, “Well, perhaps evolution helps the sin problem.” Genesis 5: after 1,656 years, the heart of man is only on wickedness all the time. We didn’t evolve—we devolved. We didn’t make moral progress—we made moral regress.
- God judged humanity with a flood except for righteous Noah. While the water washed sinners from the planet, it could not wash sin from the heart of Noah. Within a couple of years, we see Noah in a drunken stupor, indecently exposed, while his son Ham observes the show.
- Another leader arose, named Nimrod, who seemed to bring order out of Chaos. He leveraged his great power and influence to unite men in a common cause. Yet the cause was Anti-God. He used his power to do terrible things. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” He disperses and scatters them.

IN Genesis 11-12, God takes the role of a missionary and goes on a mission to fix what man could not fix. Genesis 12 marks the turning point toward redemption.

TEXT: Genesis 11:31–32 (ESV) ³¹ Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. ³² The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

Now, it when we pick up in verse 31 we see three things

1. The point of origin – UR
2. The point of destination – the Land of Canaan
3. The point of settlement – Haran

Question – At what point did the Lord appear to Abram and call him? The First appearance of Abram was in the UR of the Chaldeans.

Steven makes that clear in Acts 7:2–4 (ESV) ² And Stephen said: “Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, ³ and said to him, ‘Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.’ ⁴ Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living.

Nehemiah 9:7 (ESV)

⁷ You are the Lord, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham.

UR - Research done between 1922 and 1934 by **Sir C.L. Wooley of the British Museum** revealed incredible discoveries about UR of the Chaldeans. Ur was a highly advanced city.

- Architecturally, it was beautiful.
- In terms of simple things like plumbing, it was very advanced.
- They even had their own central heating systems.
- Not only that, but Ur of the Chaldeans had libraries, which is a mark of a highly advanced society that recognizes its place historically.
- Ur was the center of worship for the moon god HURKI. His family would regularly worship this false demonic god.

Joshua 24:2 (NAS) ² ... ‘From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.

So God goes on a mission to save Abram in this land of idolatry and false worship.

And Abram believed God.

NOTICE that I didn’t say:

- **Abram believed in God** as one might believe that God exists; James tells us even demons have such faith.
- **Nor did I say, Abram believed what God had said** – as if faith could be turned off and on as a light switch depending on what one was faced with.

BUT RATHER – ABRAM BELIEVED GOD

Abram was putting his YES on the table, saying God I trust you,

- before I know what you will require of me,
- before I have a robust understanding of who you are,
- before I know where this journey will lead me – I TRUST YOU.

1. Saving Faith is Prompted by a Pursuit

Look at verse 1 - ¹ Now the Lord said to Abram,

Before we look at the substance of what the Lord said, let's first just recognize that it was "the Lord" who said it.

We have no indication that Abram was pursuing God. He was content in his worship of HURKI, the moon god.

Yet, just as the Spirit of God hovered over the deep and said, "let there be light", The Spirit of God hovered over the lost soul of Abram and spoke life into death.

When it comes to the condition of Human morality, there are basically three positions.

1. **We are basically Healthy, no need to worry, humanity is in good shape.** That perspective is not too popular because there is so much evil in the world.
 - We live with locks on our doors, even our cars.
 - We have insurance because we know things tend to go wrong.
 - We make people sign contracts because we don't trust their word.
 - We form vast armies and go to war.
 - We build missiles for the defense of our country and offense against threats abroad.

Why? We know that sin is real. We know that we can't trust the nature of humanity. We know there is a problem. Few people will argue about that.

2. **We are Sick** – Man has the potential within himself to pull himself up by his bootstraps and make things better... he just needs better environments and education... then given the right information, mankind will make the proper choices.

This is the popular view of most Americans. That's why we look so often to Washington to "fix" things. But despite the best education, there are increases in addiction, divorce, crime, and war. Why? The lunatics have taken over the Asylum. We are looking to sinners to fix sinful problems. It will never work.

3. **The Biblical view - We are Spiritually Dead.**

Now, what that means is that we are dead in relation to God. Our capacity to properly know, relate and respond to God is impotent.

This was the immediate effect of Man's original sin in the Garden. Remember God warned, "The day you eat of the fruit you will surely die". In rebellion, man did eat of the fruit, and as a result, our first parents died spiritually. From that point, humanity has existed apart from God as the living dead.

Paul sums up spiritual death in Romans 3:10-12 (NASB95)

¹⁰ as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; ¹¹ There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; ¹² All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one."

That is what Paul describes in Eph. 2:1 ¹ And you **were** dead in your trespasses and sins,

- There is an eye – but there is no vision of the beauties of Christ
- There is an ear – but there is no hearing of the Word of God
- There is a voice – but no impulse to cry out Abba Father

While we were all dead, that does not mean that we were all alike –

ILLUSTRATION - *If you glance over a battlefield, you may notice hundreds or thousands dead, but they are not all alike in death. Some torn apart by bombs, others pierced through by knives, some freshly dead, others showing the signs of greater decay. Yet all are dead.*

You say I don't feel dead – No, but you are if you know not Christ.

ILLUSTRATION: *Jeremy Bentham was a very wealthy man who died in 1832. He died with the agreement that he would give his entire fortune to the University College Hospital in London if they would embalm him and allow him to sit at their board meetings as long as the hospital existed. Apparently, the hospital needed the money because his request was carried out. To this day, At the anniversary meetings of the board, the body is brought out and the chairman of the board says, "Jeremy Bentham present but not voting." Jeremy Bentham will never raise his hand; he will never make a motion. If he does, it will be the last board meeting that the hospital ever has. Dead people can't do anything.*

ABRAHAM – was present but not voting, until ¹ Now the Lord said to Abram,

QUESTION: I want to know, has God ever spoken to your heart, has He ever dealt with you about the condition of your soul?

Beyond the words of a loving parent, beyond the instruction of a Sunday school teacher, beyond the sermonizing of a preacher – HAS GOD SPOKEN TO YOU?

- Has he revealed to you the gravity of your sin?
- Has he placed in you a fear of the judgment that is to come?
- Has he called you to come to his Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ?

SOMETIMES this is clear and obvious, sometimes it is more organic.

ILLUSTRATION: Like Paul, we are going about our business, and the Lord shows up in a blaze of Glory, knocks us to the ground, and tells us how it's going to be.

ILLUSTRATION: More often, we're like Peter. Sometimes this happens, and we are aware that something is happening, but we are unsure what it is. **EXAMPLE:** Jesus to Peter - **Matthew 16:17 (NAS)** ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven." The fact that Peter believed in God and confessed the truth about God was evidence that God had done a prior work.

Whether it is more like Peter or more like Paul – Saving faith is always a response to God. Salvation is of the Lord.

2. Saving Faith is in a Person not a Plan

NOTICE WHAT GOD SAID - "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you;

Note the progression – Go forth,

- From your country
- From your relatives
- From your father's house.

Where to Lord? Trust me.

How will you accomplish this, Lord? Trust me.

GOD is calling Abram to trust HIM, not His plan.

TYPICALLY, people will visit a church like this, and at some point, God will show them that although they have been religious, they have never really known Christ. They aren't genuinely Christian. They desire to be, they want to be, but they are not yet born from above. They will sense a drawing and yearning, a wooing to come to Christ, yet they want all of their questions answered up front:

- God, what will this cost me? Will there be a financial requirement?
- God, will I lose friends?
- God, will I lose my job?
- God, will you make me move to Africa, marry an ugly wife, and be a missionary?

At one point in my ministry, I would try to answer all of those questions, but not anymore.

You see, the reason some of you are not genuine followers of Christ is that you will not

trust the character of God. Like Eve, Satan has convinced you that God is up to something. He is the great cosmic killjoy who loves to find someone having fun so that he might put a stop to it.

Can you trust the character of the God who calls?

Look how God shows His intention - ² And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 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."

- ⁴ So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him; and Lot went with him.

3. Saving Faith is a Pilgrimage, not a Pitstop

Chapter 11 introduces us to Abram, and Chapter 12, he takes his first step into the journey of faith, but we will walk with Abram through another 14 chapters in his faith journey.

ILLUSTRATION: Sometimes people will say, "You Baptists believe salvation is the end of it... That's right, the front end."

LISTEN: The bible belt is full of people who made a decision as a child, but for all practical purposes, they are agnostic. They believe God is out there, but He has no real dealings in the practical areas of everyday life.

Christianity is cheap fire insurance granting them a ticket to Heaven and a get out of hell free card. Oh, we will call up God if we get in a bind, or find out we have cancer, or if our marriage is in trouble. But true saving faith is a vital part of everyday life.

You know where the validity of your faith can be seen best? Not at the Church house – at your house.

We are going to see how Abram's faith affects his marriage to Sarah, his nephew Lot, and his son Isaac. We are going to see how Abram's faith affects his worship. We are going to see how Abram's faith affects his dealings with his sin.

But the main point is, this is the story of Abram's JOURNEY of FAITH.

Can you mark your spiritual journey by the distance from your UR to Canaan? Or are you still in UR, attributing greater value to created things than the creator?

But like every Journey, it began with a single step when he departed Ur.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

In April of 1988, a seasoned skydiver named Ivan McGuire boarded a small plane over North Carolina. With over 800 jumps to his name, Ivan was confident, even relaxed, as he prepared to film a group of novice jumpers for a training video. As the plane climbed

to altitude, the jumpers double-checked their gear, tightened straps, and reviewed their plan. Cameras were rolling, adrenaline was high, and at the right moment, one by one, they leapt.

Ivan followed them out—camera rolling, free-falling, capturing the beauty and thrill of the descent. But something was terribly wrong.

As the last parachute was deployed in front of him, the footage became chaotic. Ivan had reached for his ripcord—and found nothing. In the rush of preparation, in the familiarity of routine, he had forgotten the most essential thing: he never put on his parachute.

Despite his experience, despite the gear in his hands, despite the excitement of the fall, nothing could save him—because the one thing that could have made the difference, he had never strapped on. He had faith in a system, a process, a plan—but not in what could actually save him.

Friends, this world offers us all sorts of things to hang onto—careers, relationships, reputation, wealth, even religion without repentance. But when the bottom falls out, when crisis hits, when your soul plummets into eternity—none of those things will save you. Only Jesus saves.

Saving faith isn't wishful thinking, or cultural Christianity, or checking religious boxes. It's not just falling out of the plane and hoping for the best. It's making sure you've put on the parachute of grace—secured to the finished work of Christ, not to the flimsy straps of worldly substitutes.

Don't be like the man who jumped with the camera but not the chute. Because by the time you realize it, it may be too late.