

## im-POSSIBLE – An Expectant Faith

6/14/20

Hebrews 11:8-19

Sunday AM

I read a story this week about an agnostic college prof who on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of class wanted to convince his students God didn't exist. Looking out the window, he asked, "Do you see the buildings? Trees? Grass? Clouds?" The class nodded – yes. Then he asked, "Do you see God?" Everyone replied – no! Then he began to summarize, "Exactly... buildings, trees, grass, and clouds exist; but God does not!" Then, a Christian girl spoke up, "Excuse me sir. May I ask a few questions?" He agreed. She said, "Look at our prof – Do you see his face? His hair? His clothing? Everyone nodded – yes! Then she asked, "Do you see his brain?" The class shook – NO! The girl looked at the prof and said, "Using your logic, sir – your brain doesn't exist!"

After reading this story, I began to think about our series on faith b/c faith is the ability to see the unseen – w/ faith, *seeing isn't believing... believing is seeing!*

*Faith is the assurance of things we hope for and the conviction of things we cannot see. Meaning faith is the ability to see the un-seeable – it's having spiritual sight. Hebrews 11:1*

So, faith is when our minds believe/trust in someone or something although we might not have all of the information to see it – and even though we can't see it, we know it is true and that it'll come thru for us.

Ultimately, it is the **OBJECT** of our faith that matters most. As it pertains to God, faith is believing in God not b/c we see Him but b/c we can see the evidence of God. **Much like the wind, we can't see it, but we can see the effects of it – so we know it's real.**

Which brings us to our text and *faith hero* for today. If you have your Bible, turn to **Hebrews 11:8-19**. Today, I want to introduce you to the most significant man of faith in history and the only man revered by the (3) great faiths – Christianity, Judaism, and Islam – **Abraham**. His story can be found in **Genesis 12-25**. From his life, we can learn (4) great truths about faith.

I True Faith **MOVES** When God Calls

*By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he didn't know where he was going.*

B/c Abraham is the father of our faith, most of us have missed or forgotten that originally, he was a heathen from the land of Ur who grew up in a pagan, idolatrous and unbelieving society. So, whether it was the sovereign selection of God or a searching heart tender to the idea that God must exist – **God chose/called Abraham when Abe wanted to be found.** God revealed Himself to Abraham, and he responded in faith and followed God's leading.

**The same is true for each one of us.** When we were dead in our sins, incapable of saving ourselves, **John 8:44** explains that God calls out (speaks) to us to extend His hand of grace so that we might be able to be rescued from the power, pain, penalty of sin into an eternal, loving relationship w/ God thru Christ.

**In this faith transaction** – God calls each of us from a lifestyle of sin into a new lifestyle of promise. Paul explains this truth in **2 Corinthians 5:17** – *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; the old is gone – and all things have become new.*

But God's calling moves beyond our salvation – His calling also involves our everyday lives as God is always at work in/around us to move us to His promise found in His perfect will for our lives – we just have to be willing to listen and respond.

*And His calling has nothing to do w/ our age but w/ our willingness.* Did you know that Abe was around 75 yrs young when he was first enrolled in God's school of faith? **Point** – so long as you have breath in your lungs, God has a plan/will for your life if your willing to say – YES! If you're willing to move!

**Now don't miss this** – based on God's calling on Abe, more times than not – His calling doesn't come w/ a destination/time schedule. His calling requires us to leave our comfort/convenience for the unknown to live in total dependence upon Him for the journey of life.

## II Faith **YIELDS** Today's Good Tomorrow's Best

*By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac/Jacob, who were heirs of the same promise.*

The idea of dwelling in tents, even back in Abe's day was not the way of the common man – it was the way of the nomad. Yet Abraham and his son/grandson Isaac/Jacob – the patriarchs of our faith – lived as aliens and in temporary housing in the expectation of God's promise being fulfilled. Simply put, they sought God's eternal promise more than they desired earthly pleasures/possessions. They knew God's provision was greater than anything this world could offer.

**But if we were being honest** – we struggle to wait for God's best tomorrow when we can have our wants, comforts, and conveniences today. Yet true faith is willing to yield today for God's will/best in the future. True faith understands that surrendering by faith today to trust God for His blessing's tomorrow is essential to the will of God being achieved in/thru our lives. Quite simply, true faith understands that God's plans are not only different from man's plans but always better.

**Example** – William Carey spent 35 yrs of his life serving in India tilling the mission field and sowing the gospel. As a pioneer missionary, he unwittingly invested his life to pave the way for every missionary who'd come after him. Little did he know that as He was translating the Bible in the Indian dialect, as he built relationships w/ the nationals, and as he shared his life – seeing very little fruit for his labor – that his life was for the Gospel tomorrow.

**Most often** – our lives and God's will for our lives is not about us! It's not about our comfort/convenience – it is about God's will being done in us, thru us, and sometimes, even in spite of us.

## III True Faith **WAITS** for the Miraculous

*By faith, even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children b/c she considered him faithful who had made the promise*

If you know Abraham's story, it all centers around a promise God made to him in **Genesis 12:2-3** when he was 75 yrs old to make him a great nation.

*I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. Genesis 12:2-3*

Yet when you pick up Abe's story in **Genesis 15**, much has happened; yet, Abe/Sarah remain childless. Abe goes to God and God makes a covenant w/ Abe.

*But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who’ll inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so, a servant in my household will be my heir.” Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars – if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness. Genesis 15:2-6*

Still, a number of yrs pass, and still no child. And if you know the story, Abe/Sarah take matters into their own hands – and they arrange for Abe to be intimate w/ Sarah’s maid servant Hagar – and Ishmael is born.

**But Ishmael wasn’t God’s best** – God had a better plan. Which teaches us a valuable faith lesson – *when we take matters into our own hands to force God’s plan in our way, it never works out well.* In fact, when we attempt to accomplish God’s will in our way, you can be certain an Ishmael will be born into your life.

**Listen** – this is important. Isaac was so special and critical to God’s eternal plan that God was waiting until neither Abe/Sarah could procreate to give them a miracle child. He was protecting the redemptive scarlet thread of His grace for all of us to see.

**Isaac is a foreshadowing of Jesus.** His life points to Jesus and to the sacrifice that God would make for the redemption of all-humanity.

When we get to **Genesis 17**, Abe is 99 and impotent, and Sarah is 90 and barren. *Can you do the math?* 99/impotent + 90/barren = no children! But God’s math is different than man’s math. And we learn that w/ God – anything is possible!

True faith is willing to wait for God’s best in God’s way. True faith recognizes God doesn’t need our help to accomplish His way/will – just our trust/obedience.

Which brings us to our last faith lesson from Abraham.

IV True Faith **GIVES** Expecting God

So, God fulfilled His promise and entrusted Abe/Sarah w/ a promised child. For yrs, Abe/Sarah enjoyed their only son showering him w/ all the love they had in their hearts. Then comes **Genesis 22** – and God asks Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice.

**If you don’t know the story** – Abe trusted God and took Isaac to Mt. Moriah (the same place where the Temple sat and where the holy of Holies was housed) and as he was preparing to offer his son as a sacrifice to God, God stepped in and provided a ram in the thicket recognizing Abe’s complete trust in Him alone.

*By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.*

**Can I be frank?** When I read this passage, I’m more shocked by Abraham’s immediate obedience than I am by God’s request. W/ no hesitation, arguing, or even a hint of bargaining, Abe put his obedience into motion and headed for Moriah. **But based on the Hebrew, he was fully expecting to return w/ Isaac.**

In **Genesis 22:5** – the Bible reads... *Abraham said to his servants, “Stay here w/ the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then **WE** will return to you.”*

Abraham used the plural form of the word – *nashuvah* – which meant **WE** will return. He knew God had a better plan. Apparently, Abe understood that God was obligated to keep His promise and was incapable of breaking His promise. So, he reasoned that God was either going to bring Isaac back from death or provide another way.

**This is what faith does?** When things don't make earthly sense – we still trust. Still obey – b/c we know God will be faithful to His promises and to His plan.

It's been said Abe believed and obeyed God when he didn't know *where*, when he didn't know *when*, when he didn't know *how* and when he didn't know *why*.

**Why?** B/c Abe understood that God can only be faithful to who He is and what He has promised. After 25 yrs of walking in covenant w/ God, he finally grasped that God would come thru if He would trust and obey God's leading – b/c we can all, always expect, for God to act like God.

I wonder... How has God been moving in your life to get your attention so He can reveal His calling on your life? Where has He moved you and what has He plundered to show you that all you really need is Him? And where has he placed you and called you to wait upon Him so that He can move so miraculously in/thru your life that the only explanation is God? And what is He asking you to bring to the altar for sacrifice, so that His will can be set free w/in you for His glory?