

FAITH IS A JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN

Read Hebrews 11.8-11

We have looked at faith being a sacrifice, faith being a walk with God, faith being hard work, a labour. Now we are looking at Abraham, and this is a very quick look at Abraham considering how much we owe him in terms of understanding the faith life, but we are going to limit ourselves to what Hebrews says about him, and Hebrews defines Abraham's faith as a journey into the unknown.

If you want to live by faith you have to learn to give up the right to know what is coming next. God does speak to us about the future, but He also calls us to go to places where we do not know where we are going! Abraham did not think about himself or faith, He was thinking about God.

What Abraham did was give up living in great house in the greatest city in the world of that time period. The Chaldees had indoor plumbing, underground sewage, their artwork was made with gold, their city was on the Euphrates river so water was never a problem. He gave all of that up, separated himself from his own people, from idol worship, and lived in a tent for the rest of his life because he was waiting for heaven, waiting for a city that was not built by people.

Can you imagine Abraham responding to God's call?

"Ok, God, where are we going? Do you have a map? Do you have a GPS device for me?"

"No, Abraham, i do not hand out maps. every day i will give you directions sufficient for that day. i will bring you into the country where you shall live. Abraham, i have a city that is real, more real than the Chaldees, a city that was not built by human hands, and one day you will live in that city"

So, Abraham left his home and his prestige, and his inheritance, and he went looking for a city who was built by God and made by God – Abraham knew all about the new Jerusalem, that's amazing.

You have to realize how amazing the city Abraham grew up in was. It was the most amazing city in the world at the time.

You can get on the tube after church and go to the British Museum (Holborn) and you can see the ancient Chaldees, you can see the gold and the riches they had, you can see cut outs of their underground sewage system. The streets were paved, it was not some little village hut Abraham left – it was a city of comfort, beauty and riches.

AND GOD SAID "GIVE IT UP, ABRAHAM, give it all up, give up your friends, give up your parties, give it all up to me, Abraham, and follow me"

And Abraham did it because FAITH IS A JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN. And to do that – you have to leave the KNOWN BEHIND. You are going to have to give up SOME KNOWNs for an UNKNOWN future – trust GOD, have FAITH.

You cannot tell who someone is by their environment, their surroundings. There might be someone here with a good job and you all think – they have a good job, that's lovely. But if they would die for a job, and wouldn't give it up for ANYONE – they pay him to work on Sunday morning, and he obeys the job, then they are not living by faith. Some people would die for their house – they are not like ABRAHAM, not a PILGRIM, not suitable for journeys into the unknown!

GOD may never ask you to give up your job, your house, everything, but YOU SHOULD BE WILLING TO – you should have a heart that says "ANYTHING YOU WANT LORD, it's yours. I will go where you want, do what you want, have what you want!"

I get this one a bit: "Ben, I love the church planting you are doing, God called me to plant a church too, years ago. He called me to preach!" And I go "Excellent, tell me about the church" – and we find out they never started it. These people were not willing to anything. We need a heart that cries out "LORD I AM WILLING TO DO WHATEVER YOU WANT."

Go ahead and do what you want is NOT KINGDOM MINDED, NOT FAITH, not discipleship – IT IS NOT ACCEPTING THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS. You must not be a rebel to GOD to have amazing faith – you have to have an attitude that says "Let's do it"

God told me "Go to DAGENHAM and plant a church Ben" and I started asking "are their Christians in Dagenham, will people come, where will we meet, how shall I do it, what shall this be and that be, and, and, and..."

I was wrong. I had to be prepared to GO even when you do not know where you are going or how it will work. God wanted ABRAHAM to be moving – HE WANTED HIM TO WALK INTO THE UNKNOWN – Abraham walked away from friends and families to JUST GO WHERE GOD SAID and HE HAD NO IDEA. That's faith. He left Ur of the Chaldees, an amazing city and started looking for a city with the founder and builder being GOD!

FAITH IS A JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN!

Abraham left it all and WALKED INTO the unknown – and GOD CALLS THAT FAITH. Some of you might be called to UNKNOWN NATIONS – I have just been to Serbia for the first time, next month I am going to Pakistan for the first time – this is our YEAR OF AMAZING FAITH AND I AM GOING TO NEW PLACES! It's exciting!

YOU HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO GO WHEREVER – I TELL THE LORD I WILL GO WHEREVER – EVEN IF I DON'T KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN I GET THERE. If me being there will mean more salvations, more inspiration, more life, more healings, then I WILL GO THERE. I have met pastors and ministers who say things like "I WILL GO HERE or there, but not there". Why not listen to GOD – FAITH COMES BY HEARING, not reasoning. We have to have an unreasonable faith.

WE NEED the attitude of Abraham – like I said we will do a series on him at some point this year – but the essence of his faith, the reason he is the father of faith, the thing that stands out is this: I AM LEAVING BECAUSE GOD SAID GO, and I have nothing else but a voice.

All Abraham had was a word. Moses had a burning bush; Gideon got a fleece. BUT Abraham was like the man in Matthew 8 – at your word I WILL GO.

Single people – when you get married – it’s shocking to me so many people are trying to marry at the lowest possible level, they tell me “well, they are a believer, they have been to church twice this year, and they once read their Bible I remember in 2008, so yeah BIBLICALLY I can marry them.”

You want to marry someone as on fire as you – more, MEN you need a wife – who if you say “I have heard God and we are going – they go too” – I have the sweetest wife, she flows with me, we are together – and we don’t always get it right, but if I said “God has told me we are going” – she wouldn’t ask why or where, and I wouldn’t know why or where, but we would go! FAITH IS A PILGRIMAGE.

And women, you need a man who is prepared to GO ANYWHERE FOR GOD.

A lady asked me last week about marriage, she asked me what the most important thing for a woman in marriage is, and I said immediately “Submission”. That’s the truth. It’s not politically correct, but it is BIBLICALLY correct. Wives submit to husbands – now there’s a lot of horror taught in the name of that word, but that doesn’t mean there is no such thing as BIBLICAL SUBMISSION – maybe I need to take some time and teach on this later. But then the person asked well what is the most important thing for a man, and the BIBLE answer, the universal answer is LOVE. Husbands, love your wives. But we do have a lot of loving men, what we need is MEN ON A MISSION. MEN WHO ARE JOURNEYING INTO THE UNKNOWN – HOW CAN A WOMAN BE IN SUBMISSION IF THE MAN IS NOT ON A MISSION? Submission means to come under the mission, but if there is no mission there can be no submission.

ALL OF US NEED A MISSION – BUT WE NEED TO STEP OUT BEFORE WE KNOW THAT WE KNOW THAT WE KNOW! We need an ATTITUDE that SAYS I will live in tents in this world for my whole life – I am not staying here anyway, I am just passing through, this is just a pilgrimage. I WILL GO WHERE HE SAYS

And HE WILL SURPRISE YOU ON THE WAY. On November 21st 2012 God told me plant a church in GUILDFORD – I didn’t know anyone in Guildford. I knew it would be good, would grow, didn’t think I would find the pastor at GRACE AND FAITH, who would then go on to become one of my best friends. And we would build together!

When Lester Sumrall went to the mission field, God spoke to him at 3pm, GO TO MANILA AND LEAVE YOUR CHURCH. That evening he got all the deacons together and resigned, the next day he and his wife were on the plane. Not every trip has to be made that quick, but every trip has to be made with that ATTITUDE.

You need to be a pilgrim – you might not realize that JOURNEY IS FAITH, but leaving a church you love, leaving a place you care for – THAT IS FAITH! You say Lord, I love this town, but wherever you want me to go!

ARE YOU IN THE PLACE WHERE WE CUT ANYTHING OUT OF OUR LIVES THAT GOD WILL ASK YOU TO CUT? ARE YOU READY TO JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN, ARE YOU READY TO WALK WITH GOD and SAY "LORD, I am not married to the things of the world, I am joined with YOU – and whatever you say I will do"

And DO NOT GET MARRIED TO MINISTRY EITHER – if GOD told me to leave the TV ministry, to leave radio ministry, to leave here, to leave the FAMILY, to leave all of it I would not even lose a night of sleep, I would say "Praise God – now we have something else to do, let's get going LORD" Whatever HE WANTS IS BETTER THAN ANYTHING YOU HAVE – you get that out of the way and GOD WILL GIVE YOU SOMETHING BIGGER.

Some people will never LAUNCH OUT INTO THE UNKNOWN – what about my job, my career, my house – the mundane, the boring, the things you are not taking to heaven things, and they are SO MARRIED, so TIED TO THOSE THINGS – and they cannot hear God and cannot obey GOD. FAITH IS A JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN – are you willing to go with nothing but God. Abraham did – and look at how well he turned out.

I reckon other people didn't think he would turn out well, I think a lot of people think he would fail – where you off to ABRAHAM, you leave this town you will never make it, where you going, what you heard a voice – well there goes ABRAHAM, no one will hear HIS NAME AGAIN.

And now you can do 3 year degree programmes in the life and influence of Abraham in the world, and you don't know anyone else in the world from URs name! And Ur is NOTHING BUT A SAND now – Ur is gone, but the whole world knows who ABRAHAM IS!

Imagine a man who just hears GOD'S VOICE – and just goes. Just cuts everything loose and walks off into OBLIVION – I MEAN NOTHING BUT THE VOICE OF GOD! I have seen people go through destruction and persecution – I have pastored people who have lost their jobs, lost their business, been lied about – I am been with people about to kill themselves, but they could have REJOICED IN GOD. You can lose your job in some countries just for being BORN AGAIN.

FAITH IS SAYING – I WILL TAKE THAT JOURNEY ANYWAY. I will break away from anything that God tells me to leave BEHIND and I WILL WALK WITH GOD WHEREVER, WHENEVER. And I need to tell you – it's the greatest life of all. It's thrilling, it's magnificent, it's wonderful – WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD BY FAITH, WE CAN OVERCOME THE WORLD BY FAITH – and one element of faith is this – I depend on no-one but JESUS CHRIST

We cannot be those who say "We don't put God first", we cannot be those who draw back through unbelief – NOW I AM SHOWING YOU WHAT FAITH LOOKS LIKE – you can work out what unbelief looks like!

FAITH looks like an excellent sacrifice. UNBELIEF looks like "I don't want to give to GOD"

FAITH looks like a walk with God. UNBELIEF looks like "I don't want to walk with God"

FAITH looks like a labour of preparation, hard work. UNBELIEF IS LAZY – I don't want to work for God.

Unbelief sounds like: And for crying out loud – I DO NOT WANT TO JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN with strange people and strange food and not knowing what is going on – I want to be anchored in a nice place, I want to be secure.

THE WORLD IS BEING DESTROYED ONE DAY – so don't get that attached, the WORD OF THE LORD STANDS FOREVER, get attached to that. Let your strength, let your security BE IN HIM, and HIS GRACE AND GOODNESS!

QUESTIONS

1. Which element of faith inspires or challenges you the most?
 - An excellent sacrifice (Abel)
 - Walking with God (Enoch)
 - Hard Work (Noah)
 - A Journey Into the Unknown (Abraham)
2. “If you want to live by faith you have to give up the right to know what is coming next”. Are there times when you have not stepped out in faith because you decided you would wait until you knew more? Is there something you should step out and do now?
3. All Abraham had was a word! Moses had a burning bush, Gideon had a fleece, but the father of our faith only heard God and that was enough. What situations can we be expecting confirmation when we really should be just accepting the Word of God?
4. What does it mean to have the attitude of a pilgrim?
5. Do not get too attached to the world, it is going up in smoke one day. How can we live our life in the awareness that this world is temporary but heaven is our permanent home?
6. What about this message inspired or challenged or encouraged you the most?