

### Abraham's Life of Faith 7 - 11

• Review

#### 7. Faith generates obedience

We have turned aside to consider the great promises to Abraham, but now we must come back to thinking about the nature of faith, as we see it in the story of Abraham.

We have seen (1) that faith is based on a revelation of God's will, and (2) that it is intensely personal. (3) Faith focuses especially on the promises of God. (4) Faith requires patience, and (5) faith and hope are closely linked. We have discovered (6) that faith may have to surmount great obstacles. Now there is more.

**7. Faith generates obedience.** 'So Abram left, as Yahweh had told him', says Genesis 12:4. It was a gigantic step for Abram. It certainly could not have been easy. He had to give up natural ties with his family and clan, and no doubt had to face a lot of disapproval, for a clan does not let go of one of its members easily. God said He would give Abram a land but at that time the Canaanites were there. God spoke of multiplying Abram so that he would become a nation, but at that time Sarai was barren. Many people would have resisted God's command, but Abram did not.

What led to his obedience was his faith. Faith pushes us into obedience. It is not violent; it does not force us. Yet it certainly puts powerful pressure on us. The more we believe God the easier it is to obey God. Obedience is natural to us if we are convinced that what God says is true and trustworthy. Faith is something powerful. It grips the heart. It is a deep persuasion that something we hear from God is true. We have to respond. It is as if we have no choice. When Abram heard these promises, he believed them. It was almost inevitable that he should start travelling as God said. Faith generates obedience. 'Abram left, as Yahweh had told him'.

#### 8. Faith is the opposite of sight

• When you see  
something you  
no longer need  
faith

**8. Faith is the opposite of sight.** God told Abram, 'Go forth . . . to the land which I will show you...', but God did not say what land it was and Abram had never seen it. When Genesis 12:5 says they set out for Canaan the writer is speaking from a later viewpoint. It means that they were called to the place that, **as the writer knows**, turned out to be Canaan. Although Abram knew which direction to travel in, he did not know precisely where the land was until the point mentioned in Genesis 13:14-17. God leads us step by step. When you **see** something you no longer need faith. At Jesus' Second Coming, there will be no faith in Jesus because every eye shall **see** Him. If you are seeing it is not faith, it is seeing! Faith is believing now what everyone will believe one day. 'We walk by faith, not by sight' <sup>□1</sup>.

<sup>□1</sup> 2  
Corinthians 5:7

#### 9. Faith includes involvement in practical matters

**9. Faith includes involvement in practical matters.** Abram was not called to retire into a monastery or become a solitary hermit outside of ordinary society. Far from it! He travelled with Sarai his wife and took also his nephew Lot and a large community of workers and assistants plus many sheep and goats <sup>□1</sup>. Faith is not the opposite of practical skilfulness. Men and women of faith become practical in matters of everyday living. Faith is not super-religious! It is not like being alone in a cathedral; it is more like staying cool when you have a large and hectic family to care for. It is a matter of trusting God in the midst of earthly cares and responsibilities.

<sup>□1</sup> 12:5

## 10. Faith receives confirmations

- Confirmations after we believe

10. **Faith receives confirmations.** Abram had left Ur many years before with his family. Now he travels from Haran following the well-known western routes that travellers used. Eventually he gets to Shechem and the oak of Moreh. He finds the land is occupied by Canaanites <sup>1</sup>. Then he receives a fresh encouragement. God appears to him <sup>2</sup>. It is a confirmation that what he has been doing is right

<sup>1</sup> 12:6  
<sup>2</sup> 12:7

God does not like to give us 'signs' before we believe Him, but He likes to give confirmations after we believe Him. God had appeared to Abram before in Ur, but had not appeared to him for some time. When he gets to Canaan, God appears again. It was a confirmation of his faith. God likes us to believe Him whether He gives us special 'signs' or not, yet after we have trusted Him and have acted in faith He often lets something happen that rewards and confirms our faith.

Shechem was an ancient Canaanite town, roughly in the centre of the area that would later be known as Israel. It is at this point that God appears to Abram and gives him a fresh revelation.

## 11. Faith leads to further understanding

- The 'seed' of Abraham

11. **Faith leads to further understanding.** A new word appears in the story of Abram at this point: it is the word 'seed'. God says '*I will give this land to your seed*' <sup>1</sup>. It is an eighth promise clarifying the seven promises of Genesis 12:2-3. The purpose of God will go forward through a 'seed'. The word 'seed', as we have noticed before <sup>2</sup> is ambiguous. It can refer to a single entity, 'a seed'. It can be a collective word, 'seed' meaning many seeds. This means that the phrase 'seed of Abram' can be taken in more than one way. Actually there are four ways we can take it according to whether it is taken biologically or spiritually, collectively or singularly.

<sup>1</sup> 12:7  
<sup>2</sup> Genesis 3:15

- Isaac

Biologically and as an individual, the seed is **Isaac**.

- Israel

Biologically and as a group, the seed is **Israel** the earthly nation.

- Jesus

Spiritually and as an individual, the seed is **Jesus**.

- All believers

Spiritually and as a group, the seed is **all believers** in Jesus.

At that moment Abram was probably thinking mainly of having a son and of the nation that would come through him, but God had more in mind than Abram realised. Yet his faith was growing in understanding. He was receiving fresh revelations from God. To him that has shall more be given.



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