

July 6, 2008

The Bridge Bible Fellowship

Pastor Paul S. Brown

Hebrews 11:8-16

“Jesus Christ is Infinitely Better!”
Examples of Faith, Part Four: Abraham

- I. Jesus Christ: Infinitely Better in His PERSON (1-7)
- II. Jesus Christ: Infinitely Better in His WORK (8:1-10:18)
- III. Christianity: An Infinitely Better WALK OF FAITH (10:19-13:24)
 - A. The Confidence of Faith (10:19-39)
 - B. The Examples of Faith (11)
 1. Definition (Description) of Faith (11:1-3) - Faith: a) Recognizing the invisible God; b) Responding obediently to God’s spoken word; c) Receiving God’s gracious approval
 2. Examples of Faith (11:4-40)
 - a. Abel (v. 4) – Faith Worshiping
 - b. Enoch (v. 5-6) – Faith Walking
 - c. Noah (v. 7) – Faith Working
 - d. Abraham (v. 8-19) – Faith _____

Discussion Questions:

1. Many people think that they just need to “ask Jesus into their hearts” and they will go to heaven. They believe that things like repentance and obedience are “add-ons” to saving faith but are not necessary to genuine saving faith. Is this biblical? How does Hebrews 11 answer this? [Note: please read Hebrews 10:39 as an introduction to Hebrews 11 and what it tells us about “faith.”]
2. Why does Abraham have more verses in Hebrews 11 about his faith than the people mentioned before him? Why would this be significant to the readers of Hebrews? What had they been taught by their rabbis about Abraham’s faith? What do you think most Americans believe about “faith”? Do they believe that they are saved entirely by grace through faith or do they also think that their good works involved in saving them? What do you believe?
3. In Heb. 11:8 it says that Abraham “obeyed” when he was being called by God. We call this immediate obedience (even though it certainly took some time to pack up and leave). One person observed that Abraham obeyed when he didn’t know where (v. 8-10), how (v. 11-12), when (v. 13-16), or why (v. 17-19). How is this an example of genuine saving faith? How is this an example of walking with God (as opposed to asking God to walk with us)? If a person is unwilling to obey God (perhaps due to the fact that they don’t know where, how, when or why), what does that reveal about their “faith”?
4. What did Abraham “go out” from when he left his home town; Ur of the Chaldeans? [See Joshua 24:2] In order to have genuine saving faith, what might we have to “go out” from in our day? [See 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Peter 4:1-6]
5. What does it mean to live as an “alien” in a “foreign land” even when that land has been promised to you? How does this example of Abraham fit our definition of faith in Heb. 11:1-3? What would it look like for us to live as “aliens and strangers”? Read 1 Peter 2:11 - how does seeing ourselves as aliens and strangers help us in the sanctification process? Read Phil. 3:17-21 - what example did Paul leave for us? Where did he set his mind (see also Col. 3:1-4)? How did he describe people who set their minds on earthly things? What are you doing practically to keep your mind fixed on things above and living as an alien and stranger in this land?
6. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all had to live in tents (they did not completely receive the Promised Land during their lifetime). How did “faith” enable them to persevere in waiting for God’s promises to be fulfilled? What was the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise of an inheritance? How does keeping that as our hope help us deal with the disappointments of this life and/or the long periods of time when it seems like God is not answering us?
7. Hebrews 11:11 is very difficult to translate. According to the NIV translation, is the focus here on the faith of Sarah or the faith of Abraham? Which better fits the context of v. 10 and 12? Read Gen. 16. Was Sarai an example of faith that was willing to wait a long time? What were (are) the consequences of her not waiting on the Lord for the right heir as God promised? What can we learn from that about “waiting” on the Lord to fulfill His promises in His perfect timing?
8. God is not ashamed to be called the God of people who live by faith. If you have faith like Abraham’s, then God tells the whole universe, “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and _____ (fill in the blank with your name).” Which part of the definition of faith in Heb. 11:1-3 is this? What could be more important than having the God of the universe glad to be associated with you? What you will you do differently this week to grow in faith: worshiping, walking, working, and waiting?