

Faith Works

Part 4

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May 27, 2018

Review — Faith Works, it produces *and* it needs to be worked/exercised!

- *Anchor Verse in Hebrews 11*

- **Hebrews 11:1**

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Defined

- **substance hoped for** — faith is the **foundational, concrete, assurance** that what you **hope for will happen**... substance and hope must be rooted in the word, ways, and works of God!
- **evidence of not seen** — faith is the proof, conviction that the **unseen** and **not yet** will become the **seen** and **enjoyed**!
- **By faith** — **Abel** more excellent sacrifice; **Enoch** walked, prophesied, pleased; **Noah** heard, feared, prepared.
- **We sense** — in looking at these lives of faith — they seem only and always victorious, glorious, onward, upward — NOT TRUE!

Today — An Imperfect Faith Journey — a look into Abraham and Sarah outside Hebrews 11

Important — not disrespecting them or their faith journey in any way; also not condoning their imperfections; taking a detailed look into their imperfections *and* God's gracious response to them... *which should encourage us big time!*

- **Hebrews 11:8**

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

- *This was accurate, but not detailed...*
- *Detailed story of Call of Abraham, have to go back to Genesis...*

- **Genesis 12:1-4**

Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Observations

- LORD had said — when?
- This is Stephen speaking in Acts

- **Acts 7:2-4**

And he said, “Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, ‘GET OUT OF YOUR COUNTRY AND FROM YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME TO A LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.’ Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell.”

Application — God told Abraham in Mesopotamia, **before** Haran, Ur of Chaldees, to leave his country, **and** his family, father’s house... Abraham left... ***and went to Ur (not to the land that God would show him), and took his father and nephew Lot...***

QUESTION — Have you ever **not** totally trusted God in your faith journey? Held back, held on, joined to someone or something to bring security, comfort or assistance?

- If you’re honest enough to answer yes — you’re in good company — so did Abraham!
 - **Lot** — brought tension, separation, abduction, destruction, incest, generational war
 - Produces Ammonites and Moabites, enemies forever
 - **Hagar** — he joins himself to her, assistance to make God’s promise happen
 - Produces Arab nation

LISTEN — **partial obedience produces future problems... delayed obedience produces delayed fulfillment** —***not until separation from Lot and Hagar that the promise happens.***

Abraham’s partial obedience was coupled with partial truth... Abe told half-truths

- **Genesis 12:10-13**

Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land. And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, “Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.”

- Half-truthed Pharaoh

- **Genesis 20:13**

And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, that I said to her, ‘This is your kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, “He is my brother.”’

- Half-truthed King Abimelech
- Premediated plan of action — we decided
- Half-sister; same father, different mothers

QUESTION — have you ever been so afraid in your faith journey that you half-truthed, lied?

FACT: Abraham, in all his faith, still had some fear
God addresses this in Genesis 15:1
“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield...”

Partial obedience, partial truth, and fall-on-his face laughter — at God’s promise

- **Genesis 17:15-19**

Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.” Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” And Abraham said to God, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!” Then God said: “No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.”

- Laughed at the promise — “Isaac” means laughter
- Three men show up — one is the Lord, restating the promise

- **Genesis 18:12-15**

Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?” And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?’ Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.” But Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. And He said, “No, but you did laugh!”

- Laughed, lied, feared
- Sarah — the mother of us all — was not perfect — God still used her

QUESTION — have you ever laughed at a miraculous promise of God? Questioned a miraculous promise? Mary asked *how*? By the power of the Holy Spirit! Let it be. Elizabeth said, blessed are you for believing!

**FACT — get past your laughing and questioning —
and move on to believing — be blessed!**

LISTEN — partial obedience, partial truth, laughing, questioning, *but still journeying* — God doesn’t give up on you! Your faith journey isn’t over because it has been an imperfect journey. Look at Abraham and Sarah!

Close

- with NT story about the faithfulness of Jesus in our imperfect faith journey

- **Luke 22:31-34**

And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.” Then He said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.”

LISTEN — whether it’s our own imperfections or Satanic attack, Satan wants to sift us, shake us down — in hopes that our faith would fail, cease, die... “look how you’ve blown it, missed it, doubted, delayed, lied, laughed, denied etc., God is done with you.”

- **Ephesians 6:16**

...above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

JESUS’ RESPONSE — He prays for us,
that our faith in the goodness and grace of God would not fail,
that we would return to Him after our imperfections,
and that we would continue our faith journey
making a difference in the lives of others.

QUESTION: Have you partially obeyed? Have you partially told truth? Have you fully laughed? Have you honestly questioned? Have you denied Jesus? Are you being sifted, shaken, shot at?

ANSWER: Know that Jesus is praying for you, He hasn’t quit on you, lift up the shield of faith and keep journeying! Blessing, fulfillment, God’s faithfulness awaits you!

**Jesus has more confidence in the power of His prayer
than in the power of the enemy’s attack!**

**Don’t let today’s imperfections
keep you from tomorrow’s promises!**

Discussion Questions

1. Had you ever realized that God had called Abram BEFORE he lived in UR, and that he was NOT supposed to take Lot with him? *Many of you may have — I had not!*
2. Have you ever not totally trusted God in your faith journey — tried to help Him along? How?
3. Have you ever been so afraid in your faith journey that you half-truthed, lied? Result?
4. Have you ever laughed at or questioned a miraculous promise of God? What happened?
5. Have you ever felt like quitting because of your imperfections?
How has today’s message affected that?