



Sunday March 10, 2019
Faith
Part-5 : Faith in the Old Testament

Quick review-Last few Sundays:

Part-1 : An Introduction to Faith

Part-2 : God's Sovereignty, Grace and Faith

Part-3 : Faith And The Ministry of Jesus

Part-4: Jesus' Teaching on Faith

Today : Faith In The Old Testament

The words 'Believe', 'Believed', 'Faith' are not found very often in the Old Testament. (For instance in the New King James version of the Bible, the word 'believe' is found in 17 verses, the word 'believed' is found in just 22 verses and the word 'faith' is found in just 2 verses, in the Old Testament.) However we know that people in the Old Testament also walked in faith in God.

Hebrews 11 that great faith chapter lists the names of many men and women in the Old Testament who walked by faith in God. Many of them saw great things accomplished and saw the mighty manifestations of the power of God. Others endured great hardships, suffering and made great sacrifices - all through faith. So there are many Old Testament lives that we could examine to learn how they walked by faith in God.

Today, we will first consider a few insights presented in Hebrews 11. We are not repeating some things that we have seen earlier from this chapter, but just a few additional insights.

After that we will look at just two Old Testament examples to learn about faith.

Walking In Faith Gives Us A Good Testimony Before God

Hebrews 11:2,39

2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,

It was because of their faith in God, all of these Old Testament men and women obtained a good testimony, or a good report before God. As some versions put it, they pleased God or were commended by God through faith.

This holds true for us as well today. We obtain a good report or good testimony before God, through faith.



Living By Faith In The Promise Of Future Things

Hebrews 11:10,13-16

10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

The Scriptures indicate in Hebrews 11, that the men and women of faith in the Old Testament were looking for a heavenly city, a heavenly homeland or a heavenly country, which God had prepared for them. God had revealed this to them by His Spirit. They had some understanding, although not clearly or fully, of an eternal Kingdom that awaited God's people.

It is also interesting to observe how they related to the promises of things to come. Hebrews 11:13 teaches us that they SAW the promises, were CONVINCED of the promises, and EMBRACED the promises and CONFESSED in line with the promises. This was their expression of faith in the promises of things still in the future. **Because they lived in the present with an eye on the future, and with faith in the promises of the future, God is not ashamed to be called their God.** How much more should we today, live in a similar manner - with an eye on eternity.

Hebrews 11:39

And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,

Although by faith they saw wonderful things happen during their life time, they did not obtain or see this aspect of their faith materialize. They died without seeing the fulfillment of this promise - of seeing and being part of a heavenly city, a heavenly homeland, a heavenly country and an eternal Kingdom. Yet they obtained a good report because they walked by faith in their day and time.

Hebrews 11:40

God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

God has provided better things for us. We are living on the other side of the Cross where Christ came and made full provision for salvation and eternal life. We are now part of the Kingdom of God enjoying the benefits.

God's plan is that the men and women of faith from the Old Testament, and us, believers who are on this side of the Cross enjoying better things, that we will all together enjoy the fulfillment



of these things to come - a heavenly city, a heavenly homeland, a heavenly country and an eternal Kingdom. Together, we will see the fulfillment of these promises.

Now we will look at two Old Testament examples of faith:
One, the people of Israel, then Second, the life of Abraham.

The People Of Israel Inheriting The Land Of Promise

The New Testament teaches us to learn lessons from the journey of the people of Israel and their taking possession of the land of promise (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:1-11; Hebrews 3:15-19; Hebrews 4:1-11).

We know very well the story of Israel coming all the way to the edge of the Promised Land. They then sent out twelve spies (Numbers chapters 13 and 14). Ten of the spies reported that there were giants in the land, and the people of Israel were like grasshoppers before those giants. There was no way, it seemed, that they could conquer the giants. Joshua and Caleb, the other two spies, saw the same giants, but recognized what God could do to them. They announced that the giants were like "bread for us", waiting to be "consumed". However the people believed the report of the ten spies, and chose not to believe the Lord who had promised that they would "*dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself*" (Deuteronomy 4:38; 7:1; 9:1; 11:23).

They let what they saw, become bigger to them than the promise of God.

They did not lay a hold of the promise of God through faith.

So for about forty years they wandered in the wilderness, until the generation that did not believe passed away, and a new generation arose whom God could take into the Promised Land.

Hebrews 3:19

So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Hebrews 4:6

Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience,

Their unbelief coupled with disobedience kept them out of the land of Promise.

The message for us New Testament believers is that we too must walk in faith to possess our inheritance. Unbelief and disobedience will keep us away from walking in what God has provided for us through the redemption we have in Jesus Christ.



Abraham, The Father of Faith

The New Testament points to Abraham as an example of a life of faith. Abraham is referred to as *“the father of all those who believe”* (Romans 4:11). Those who believe are to *“walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had”* (Romans 4:12). Hence it is good to take a close look at how Abraham walked in faith.

The Steps Of The Faith Of Abraham

We are familiar with the life of Abraham as recorded for us in Genesis 11:26 to Genesis 25:11.

Although Abraham made mistakes the Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul points to the successful steps Abraham took in his journey of faith. (This is an example of what it is to receive a "good report" through faith. God in His mercy and grace overlooks our mistakes and points to the things we did well).

Romans 4:17-21

17 (as it is written, "I HAVE MADE YOU A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS") in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;

18 who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."

19 And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.

20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,

21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

We can summarize the key steps in Abraham's journey of faith, as follows:

#1, Abraham Believed God

Romans 4:17

(as it is written, "I HAVE MADE YOU A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS") in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;

Abraham believed God. He believed that God gives life to the dead. He believed that God calls those things that do not exist into being. This is so important. We must know who we believe. We must know our God, how great He is. We must know that He is Creator God. We must know that nothing is impossible to Him.



#2, Against All Hope, In Hope, He Still Believed

Romans 4:18

who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."

This is an important principle in exercising faith in God – to have hope (an expectation, a longing, a desire) even when things seem hopeless, even when all logical reason for hope is gone. In hope, he believed. This hope then causes faith to be stirred up. Faith is the assurance, the proof of ownership, of things hoped for. There must be hope first. Hope is in the future. Faith then pulls hope out of the realm of the future, into the now, into our possession.

"..so that he became...according to what was spoken.." The objective or the desired result of faith is to see the fulfillment of that which has been promised to us. That we become according to what God has spoken. God has spoken and continues to speak to each of us through His written Word and by His Holy Spirit. This produces faith in our hearts. We hope for its fulfillment. And we exercise faith in the Word. The result of our faith is that we become what God said we would become, we have what God said we would have, we accomplish what God said we would accomplish.

#3, He Was Not Weak In Faith And Did Not Look At The Natural

Romans 4:19

And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.

Abraham recognized the physical impossibility - both he and his wife were old and his wife was barren. And yet, he did not allow the fact of the natural circumstances to restrain him from exercising faith in God. We do not deny the reality of the circumstances we have to deal with. The problems, the calamities, the hurt, the pain, the sickness, the torment, the financial crisis, etc., are real and yet we have the promises of God which tell us that He can turn these around. We make a deliberate choice to look beyond the circumstances and have our hope fashioned "according to what was spoken". We refuse to let our faith weaken because of the situations. Our focus is not on the natural situations but on the promise of God. This is an important key to prevent your faith from being weakened.

There was a time when Abraham was quite discouraged. He was looking at all the time that had elapsed. He saw that in the natural there was no way he and Sarah could have a child. He began to reason with God. When Abram was tired of standing in faith, God told him to look up into the night sky and see the countless stars (Genesis 15). When you are feeling tired of standing in faith, refresh your vision based on the promises of God. Paint a fresh picture of seeing God's promises being fulfilled in your life.



To keep your faith strong, focus on God and His promises and not on the circumstances.

#4, He Did Not Waver At The Promise Of God Through Unbelief

Romans 4:20

He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, ...

Unbelief is faithlessness or the absence of faith (Greek 'apistia'). Unbelief causes one to doubt, waver and stumble at the promise of God. Unbelief hinders one from receiving the fulfillment of the promise of God. Guard against unbelief. Guard against anything that comes to rob you of faith in your heart - fear, worry, doubt, reasoning, natural limitations, past experiences, etc.

#5, He Was Strengthened In Faith, Giving Glory To God

Romans 4:20

20 ... but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,

Abraham continued to grow stronger in his faith as he gave honor, worship, praise and thanks to God even before the promise actually came to pass. As we thank God in advance for His faithfulness to His Word, as we thank Him in advance for the fulfillment of the promise, our faith is strengthened. Faith does not wait until the manifestation of the promise to give thanks to God. Faith begins to praise and glorify God in advance, even before anything actually happens for faith is certain of the outcome!

#6, He Was Fully Convinced That What God Had Promised He Will Perform

Romans 4:21

and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

To be “fully convinced” is to be absolutely sure without a doubt. This is faith. Regardless of the many questions of how, when, and what if, etc., we are to recognize that God is greater than the situations we are facing. **Faith rests in God's ability to fulfill His Word.** Having done all to stand, stand fully convinced. This is the only requirement, once you have done all you know to do to exercise your faith, stay in faith.

Abraham's Journey Of Faith

The great faith chapter, Hebrews 11, highlights certain aspects of Abraham's journey of faith.



Hebrews 11:8-12,17-19

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.

9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;

10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18 of whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR SEED SHALL BE CALLED,"

19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

Abraham obeyed in faith.

Abraham went out in faith even when he did not know where he was going.

Abraham lived in the land of promise by faith, trusting that he would have children who would inherit the land, even when he had no offspring.

Sarah herself through faith, had her body 'come alive', so that she could bear a child.

Through faith, a man who could have been given up 'as dead' gave rise to numerous descendants.

Abraham's faith went beyond receiving the promise. He believed God to the extent that even if he offered up Isaac, he knew God would bring him back from the dead, in order to keep His promise (Word) to Abraham.

Faith is about relationship with God. Receiving the fulfillment to a promise is what happens along the journey of faith. The end result of each fulfilled promise is a deeper relationship with God who made the promise, a greater understanding of who He is, the One in whom we believe.

The joy of faith is not just the fulfilled promise, but a greater intimacy with the One who gave the promise.

Faith Without Corresponding Actions Is Dead

James 2:20-26

20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?

23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS ACCOUNTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS." And he was called the friend of God.

24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.



25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

This passage in James, pointing to Abraham's life of faith, highlights the importance of acting in line with our faith. That is to have 'works' that correspond to what we believe.

Faith without works is dead (vs 20, 26). Faith cannot produce by itself. Faith must have works - that is faith must be exercised, expressed and released in order to produce, to have effect, to bear fruit.

Through works, faith is made perfect (vs 22), made complete or brought to maturity, to a place where it can bear fruit.

So in order to have our faith produce, we must act our faith - do what you believe. Act in line with the faith in your heart.

If you believe God will bless you in all the work of your hands, according to His Word, then go out and put your hands to work.

If you believe that God will heal the sick and cast out demons through you, then go out and minister to the sick and oppressed and possessed.

Act in line with His Word and then faith in the Word will produce and bear results.

MINISTRY TIME | SALVATION CALL



LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Sunday March 10, 2019
Faith
Part-5 : Faith in the Old Testament

This is a simple guide for use in Life Group discussions. Our objective is to focus on the application of the Sunday sermon - how each one is becoming a doer of the Word and building their life on God's Holy Word. The Life Group meeting would normally last for 2 hours. Each Life Group would have up to 12-15 people.

Preparation

To prepare for the Life Group meeting, you can listen to the Sermon Key Points (sermon summary in five minutes) or the full length Sunday sermon. You can also review the Sunday Sermon notes. All these are available in the "All Peoples Church Bangalore" mobile App or online at apcwo.org/sermons . Pray for the Life Group meeting and invite the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Welcome

The Life Group meeting may commence with a time of prayer, worship and a fun activity.

LISTEN to God's Word

Read the following Scripture passages: *Romans 4:17-21; James 2:20-26*

INVESTIGATE God's Word Together

Please discuss a few of these together, giving time for people to share their insights. We encourage each one individually to make notes of their personal learning during the Group discussion.

Imagine you are believing God's promise for a particular area in life (success, professional growth, healing, financial provision, blessing on marriage/family, etc.). Discuss how you would follow the steps of Abraham's faith to receive a fulfillment of the promise. Perhaps different ones in the group can pick different areas of life. Also, imagine challenges that could come in that area, trying to rob you of your faith, and how you would overcome these.

While we know all of these statements are important, which one of these really stands out for you, in the matter of exercising faith in God?

If time permits, each one takes a few (3 minutes max) to share one or two key learning and how they see themselves applying it into their specific life situations. Encourage each one to participate and share.



FELLOWSHIP by sharing your life and spiritual journey

Each one takes a few (3 minutes max) to share anything from their walk with God, something God has been teaching them, a testimony of answered prayer or a specific challenge that they would like prayer for. Encourage each one to participate and share.

ENCOURAGE each other by praying and ministering to one another

Get into small groups of two or three and take turns to thank God and pray for each other in the light of what was learnt today. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Expect the gifts of the Holy Spirit to flow bringing healing, releasing miracles, prophecy, etc.

Regroup and pray together for:

1, families to be protected and strengthened

2, a mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on us as a church and through us to bless many others in our city and nation. Nothing but a mighty work of God's Spirit can change our city and nation.

3, for the BUILD TO IMPACT project - for God's hand to guide us through the land search and acquisition process, and for finances to be more than enough to get this project done.

Close by thanking God together.