

Roots of Saving Faith

Genesis 12:1-9, CBC, Sunday AM, August 26, 2024

What is faith? Synonyms like believe, trust, confidence, reliance; Are you a believer, a Christian? what makes you a believer? Pride ourselves in our skepticism, but underneath our critiques, there still exists faith; includes facts/logic of putting facts together, but more—words like optimism, hope, expectation go with faith and speak of inspiration/motivation/drive; then, is faith more of a feeling? Words like hope, faith, love are warm word, safe—give contented/happy thoughts—give example; LOVE to shop for food—specific things buy at specific places (Sam's, BJ's, Aldi, Walmart for what left on list—second tier places kind of fill list, but more, fill pantry—Glenwood, Sharp Sharper, BB's) children LOVE to tell me bought too much/wrong things, but scour bags—while chide me for what bought, find something that makes excited; most often, those things come from second tier fun stores, but sometimes, from BJ's/Sams; coupons dangerous—if 2-3 dollar coupons, sometimes HAVE to buy even if unnecessary; sounds like girl math—have you followed the TikTok trend? girl math leads me to current favorites (oreo bars); some of my kids believe in them, therefore, I believe in them—fact & feeling involved; fine, but logic enabling me to buy them might need to be checked regardless of my feelings; now, think about people—what do you believe about people? all valuable? Everyone has a point/perspective? Don't have to agree w everyone? Certain ones are beyond changing? Do you feed off of relationships or are they a drain? What is your responsibility to the people around you? What defines a good relationship? It is important to think through these questions and the assumptions under them in order to answer this next question: what does it mean for you to "trust God"? when can you with confidence call yourself a Christian?—Christians ARE believers/have faith; no faith in God, no ability to please Him Heb. 11:6, no Christian; what does GOD say that it means for you to trust God? in day when words mean little, emotions of happiness, fulfillment, fear, anxiety, depression, hurt, and anger determine reality, need solid foundation for faith; biblical faith is NOT girl math; it is this need for foundations that led me back to Genesis; why Abraham? LOVE narratives, LOVE to study parts haven't—remember my passion awakened as child, desire to pass on--to bring God's story of individuals to His intended relevance for everyday living—Rom. 15:4-6 rings in my ears--Faith has become personal, faith story/journey is our own—how/where grow serve—argue that it is personal, but rooted in more that is same then different; more communal than individual—Gal. 3:27-29; note place of faith AND tie to Abraham in so many verses; Gal. 3:6-8, Rom. 4:11—this tie b/n Abraham & faith & faith to our relationship w God makes Abraham VERY important; Boice, "with the exception of Jesus Christ, Abraham is probably the most important person in the Bible." P. 435 Gen. 1-11 covers some 2000+ years—at least 19 generations—14 chapters for this one man chs. 12-36; many other giants in Scripture, but Abraham seen as father in faith; many ways, history of redemption starts w God's call to him; Boice notes Jesus' genealogy in Matthew goes back to Abram 1:1; Zecharias speaks of fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham Lk. 1:68, 72-73; long section in Heb. 11, (vv. 8-12, 17-19); called friend of God 3 x (II Chron. 20:7, Is. 41:8, Jm. 2:23) believed God and lived out that belief; Heb. 11:6; should encourage us who would follow God by faith as we've been called in a day when faith's definitions shaky; want to give NOT an over-arching definition of faith, but a premise from our passage today concerning roots of faith; Biblical faith begins with God's call, is motivated by God's promise, and responds with obedience and worship because of the worthiness of the One who called.

I. The Call of God v. 1

1 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; first thing grabs ear is content of call; go forth; then lists 3 groups that identify person, from b/r each speaks of separation--from country—tribe, used to be thought of as upper Mesopotamia, but evidence for Ur of Chaldeans near Persian Gulf—where Tigris and Euphrates meet; in ancient times, port city—fruitful; Boyce notes corn, date-palm crops, apples, grapes, pomegranates, and tamarisks growing; leave this rich country; last time, met players in this narrative—11:26ff., and saw Terah had 3 children, Haran died, leaving children—Lot, Milcah married uncle Nahor--left Ur for Haran (today, southeastern Turkey); 11:31 BIG deal! if from lower Ur, 550-600 mile journey—another place of civilization—on trade routes b/n east and west (means road/journey); Leave—country familiar w, cities of Ur, Haran; from relatives/your people—leave/separate from, talking about clan—those like you, those who get you—talking about culture--Language, customs, definitions, how you do things, fix things like conflict, tragedies, community (time w people or tasks, play games or work, together or alone, talk or quiet—what is acceptable, polite; how protect—what protect) not perfect, frustrations, but also understanding (think of Celtic Thunder—songs of drinking, leaving marriage partner, but combined w songs of beauty of country, people; country music/earlier was folk music for Americans) think about w marriage (leave/cleave) don't realize that bringing in a whole other culture EVEN when have similar

backgrounds; **from father's house**—personal—identity, safety, etc.; we focused on small, immediate family—took some of these w him, but however long stayed Haran, **Ross notes seems to be ancestral home**--called city of Nahor in Gen. 24:10 when servant came to seek wife for Isaac, called my country, my relatives 24:4; Jacob came here w Laban 30:43; my country, my people/culture, my family; **Matthews--so strong was identity of person w father's household that individual's behavior had implications for entire family p. 111** (think Rahab in Josh. 2:18, family of one who kills Goliath benefits **I Sam. 17:25**, David's plea for punishment to only be on his family **II Sam. 24:17** leave/be separated from **3 kinship units that made up Israelite social and economic life**, Matthews (ie. Think of Olga saying left dishes when came; Yuriy, what did you leave/what did parents leave when came; do you realize how far they are, Ely, Jose/Mabel, Glen, who did I miss from place of origin—we didn't move far, but feel that everything that gave meaning and status given up when moved here)—separate from country familiar; city dwellers; **HAVES for????** How can it be better??? Wouldn't all else be less? At least from his vantage point??? with these thoughts ringing in his ears, God continues—does NOT end there; **do you freeze/not hear the rest?** Can see it in children's eyes/some of you—can't get past one thing said—but what is the REST of what was said

II. The Promises of God vv. 2-3

other side of command is promise **Go forth . . . To the land which I will show you**; there is another place than the one where you are settled; the ones that have been good to you; the ones that are familiar—THAT is the place I want to show you; first of 7 “I wills”; Words that follow are words of blessing 2. **2 And I will make you a great nation**, implies descendants, but more than descendants—many have descendants, many share last name—Musser, Yoder, horst, hoover, sauder, martin, wenger, stauffer, good—Wenham notes that nation “is a political unit with a common land, language, and government.” in *Philips*, p. 496 3. **And I will bless you**, often material see 13:2, 14:14 4. **And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing**; Waltke name great—name not merely label, but revelation of character; “The procreative intentions of divine blessing are always within the context of loyalty to the spiritual transformation of future generations.” Waltke, p. 205; Matthews think of name next to Babel 11:4; follow of man seeking wisdom on own 3:5, fame 6:4; Abraham name change would speak to this—father of nations and kings; how will he be blessing to others? 5. **3 And I will bless those who bless you**, 6. **And the one who curses you I will curse**. protection and blessing based on how treat object of God's promises **And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.** Reflexive? Bless themselves—ie. You will be symbol of blessing—others will use you as their standard of blessing; **most see as passive**—THROUGH you, they will be blessed; Abram would be channel of blessing for whole world—“No one would find divine blessing apart from the blessings given through Abram and his seed.” Ross, p. 264—**points NOT to Abram, but to God blessing Abram**—7th “I will” not until v. 7, but this 5-fold blessing tied up in 7 I wills amazing b/c to this point, only 5x God said to have blessed in 2000+ years of Gen. 1-11; **1:22, 28, 2:3, 5:2, 9:1** **Most recent word from God has been God's curse/dispersion of nations who sought to make name for themselves 11:1-9** this AFTER God mercifully restored after Noah—universal promise to not destroy earth; flood second act of judgment Gen. 6:7; first was expelling from Garden 3:23-24, at least 4 curses—serpent 3:14, ground 3:17, Cain 4:11, Canaan, Ham's son cursed to servitude b/c of father's actions 9:25-27—**here, in face of doubt of God's favor ever being possible or offered again, God speaks to show his intent to shower His favor not to whole world like did to Noah when left ark, but with five-fold blessing to one man who just needed to LEAVE/Separate from and go with nothing but promised leading and promises to come**; Sailhamer says that way of life marked by tree of knowledge of good/evil, then by ark 7:23b, now marked w identification w Abraham and his seed (bless those who bless/curse, etc.) **but why to this man—Abram?** Went through many people/ families in ch. 10, many others in end of 11—nothing to distinguish him; God has some competition for Abram's ear; Not only god; Ur and Haran honored moon god Nannar (also known as Su'en or Sin)—probably one of many gods worshipped by Abram's ancestors Matthews **Josh. 24:2**, pagan background/heritage; don't know if/when family turned from them **Gen. 31:53**; **but DO know that loyalties and traditions die hard** Gen. 31 Rachel stole/hid Laban's household gods; Gen. 35:2ff. Jacob tells household to put away foreign gods when God calls him to move to Bethel—hides them under oak at Shechem; STILL there in **Josh. 24:14**; Abram & family not only ones who might have followed God, Gen. 4:26 said Seth's son Enosh born—“**then men began to call upon the name of the Lord.**” **Melchizedek** Gen. 14, **Job**—another from line of Peleg, but definitely few/far between **1. A period of decline in those who fear God does not negate those who DO fear God.** don't forget this or you may be more like Trump in his all/never statements than you want to be; **2. Nothing Abraham did was enough to deserve the blessing God offered him. Nothing he lacked kept him from God's blessing being offered to him.** Matthews “**divine oath is like an avalanche of blessing cascading in wave after wave on the patriarch and his children yet to come.**” p. 105 God could have worked

through another, but didn't; divine sovereignty chose him; Baldwin notes, if God had not called, would have continued as pagan, prosperous man; how would Abram respond?

III. The Response of Man vv. 4-5

A. Contemplate

so many details missing; 1. **Land I will show you**--Where is this land? How can it be better than what have? How will it become home? Why leave when have it so good--roots, reputation? Who should go with me? What if they don't want to go? Charismatic leader or quiet? Did he speak to them individually or together? did Sarai agree, persuade Lot, others? what did worship of God look like for Abraham and family? If syncretistic, why give up everything for what Abram said God told him--how did God tell him? was it a vision, dream--in the day, night; did he have to wrestle in mind/tormented, or quick decision? 2. **Great nation** have large household, but not descendants--how can I have nation without descendants? Wife barren, I'm 75; how become great nation in country where I'm not known and have no land? Respected? How can this happen in my lifetime? 3. **Bless you** - I have it good; but if I leave, how will I know it will continue, that enemies won't take it; that won't be drought, sickness 4. **Name great** how do I get reputation in foreign land? All nations of world blessed b/c of me? What if thought, Promises so big, can't see them--how would I even know if they were fulfilled? Might not be in my lifetime; I didn't ask for all this--happy/content where I am--I'll settle for just few more acres--health, reputation good, and I'll continue to worship you here? How can God expect me to leave without answers for these questions; **Applic: Where would you focus? command to separate/leave or reward? When God known for judging/cursing those who disobeyed, would you hear the cascading falls of God's blessing?**

B. Commitment vv. 4-5

--so many pieces wise ones should contemplate, other places to see how to do this, but whole last point was conjecture; Abram introduced end of ch. 11, God spoke; **NOW, for first time, Abram responds;** 4 **So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him;** v. 1 Go/Leave halak, So Abram halak, went--God spoke, Abram DID **as the LORD had spoken to him;** wait! so many questions; did call from God come in Ur or Haran? **Acts 7:2-4, Ross--narrator not concerned w strict chronology for call and move--Terah's move to Haran as parenthesis to main idea; Abram received word from God in Ur--family left to go to Canaan by going through Haran; we hear about call here, b/c here where Abram jumps off into unknown; context of call is here in Haran, details given as Abram ready to leave Matthews wherever received call, God claims part of process since Ur **Gen. 15:7; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.** He just did it?! exchanged city life/ancestral home for desert; pagans of hometown for pagan Canaanites; gave up settled life to be known as wandering Aramean Deut. 26:5; **and what he just did is a living faith;** **Heb. 11:8** what is involved w faith? Richard Phillips notes 3 classic components of biblical faith 1. **Knowledge**--"We must know and understand what is being communicated by God." p. 486 in Abraham's case, he must separate himself and go to land God would show; 2. **Belief** in what God has said. (**Ex. 5:2 Pharaoh, who is Lord that I should obey Him**) 3. **Commitment**--"We must also embrace it as true for us personally and act on that belief." Phillips, p. 487 missing much! what know is that Abram went as the LORD had spoken to him; work on passage more next week, but want to pull out couple of lessons about faith. 1. **Biblical Faith Costs because it must Endure** to go as the Lord had spoken, he had to pay; garden of eden was home; ripped them apart to be thrown out; psalmist says Ps. 133, behold how good it is for brethren to dwell together in unity--rip apart; family closest thing (leave/cleave, one flesh--children treasure, honor father/mother) LEAVE them; in order to endure, must be prepared; **Baldwin**--wrench of leaving family and going into unknown is familiar to every pioneer--God testing his faith so could develop muscle p. 29 best happen when softening influences of familiar surroundings removed, every step required dependence on God who had called him--knowledge limited; not more until later; Mk. 1:17-18 leave nets and follow; **Calvin**--"Yet it is not to be supposed, that God takes a cruel pleasure in the trouble of his servants; but he thus tries all their affections, that he may not leave any lurking-places undiscovered in their hearts. We see many persons zealous for a short time, who afterwards become frozen; whence is this, but because they build without a foundation? Therefore God determined, thoroughly to rouse all the senses of Abram, that he might undertake nothing rashly or inconsiderately; lest, repenting soon afterwards, he should veer with the wind, and return. Wherefore, if we desire to follow God with constancy, it behooves us carefully to meditate on all the inconveniences, all the difficulties, all the dangers which await us; that not only a hasty zeal may produce fading flowers, but that from a deep and well-fixed root of piety, we may bring forth fruit in our whole life." pp. 343-344 **Matt. 10:37-39, Lk. 9:62** what do you value that you seek to the loss of things heaven values? **Are you willing to pay the cost to have a faith that will endure to eternity?** every believer has to abandon past and start fresh in service of Jesus; New ambitions, priorities, associations; **Alexander Maclaren** in Philips p. 489 "Either our faith will separate us from the world, or the world will separate us from our faith and our God." 2. **Biblical Faith Obeys in the face of unanswered questions because of the greatness of the One giving the****

commands. Ross notes, “divine imperatives seldom give the details of what is to happen, although they often specify what is not to be done.” P. 262 Heb. 11:8 went not knowing what ahead; Seeing is not believing. Seeing is seeing. Believing is being confident without seeing. G. Campbell Morgan GraceQuotes—so confident of God’s words/boundaries that years later still obeyed Gen. 24:6-7; THIS is what God worked in his heart by calling him to go without knowing; part of training to follow when DON’T tell all; “For why does not God immediately point out the land, except for the purpose of keeping his servant in suspense, that he may the better try the truth of his attachment to the word of God? as if he would say, ‘I command thee to go forth with closed eyes, and forbid thee to inquire whither I am about to lead thee, until, having renounced thy country, thou shalt have given thyself wholly to me.’ And this is the true proof of obedience, when we are not wise in our own eyes, but commit ourselves entirely unto the Lord. Whensoever, therefore, he requires anything of us, we must not be so solicitous about success, as to allow fear and anxiety to retard our course. For it is better, with closed eyes, to follow God as our guide, than, by relying on our own prudence, to wander through those circuitous paths which it devises for us.” Calvin, p. 344 It is only AFTER gone, that given more; next week, get more after another 400 miles of travel; Baldwin—w/o separation, no more revelation; believer opens Scripture and hears God’s word “Christians are people of the ear, not of the eye. God does not appear to be seen but speaks to be heard. God is always present in words that bind. The community of faith is built around these speech acts.” Waltke, p. 209 Christians trust God’s Word and follow, regardless of how it feels right now—faith does NOT focus on feeling while it trusts God’s words of feeling for us; Faith is not an instinct. It certainly is not a feeling – feelings don’t help much when you’re in the lions’ den or hanging on a wooden Cross. Faith is not inferred from the happy way things work. It is an act of will, a choice, based on the unbreakable Word of a God who cannot lie, and who showed us what love and obedience and sacrifice mean, in the person of Jesus Christ. Elisabeth Elliot, Secure in the Everlasting Arms, p. 94 GraceQuotes --today, talking about the nature of faith, not whether you think God is reasonable; I Cor. Says foolishness to those who are perishing—saving faith takes His words and acts on them—work of God if you believe and take what given and obey/live it; Are you obeying what God has clearly given you to obey even with questions remaining? 3. **Biblical Faith Looks Ahead for reward.** Focus not on what given up, what done, but on what promised and One who promises; Abram went as LORD had spoken—includes believing great promise—these drove, motivated even in darkest times; (just come through Joseph—watched as patriarchs died—passed the promise on—these were rich rewards/inheritance 13:15-16, 15:5, 18, 17:6-8, 18:18-19, 22:17-18, 25:11, 26:2-4, 27:27-29, 49:28 God’s path of blessing; Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Moses, then to ten tribes Deut. 33, reaffirmed by Joseph Gen. 50:24—they trusted that He who promised was faithful and received what was promised

Conclusion: What do we have so far as look at roots of faith? **Biblical faith begins with God’s call, is motivated by God’s promise, and responds with obedience and worship because of the worthiness of the One who called.** What IS God’s call to us? Abram’s faith led to all families blessed by Peter to Jews Acts 3:25, Paul to Gentiles Gal. 3:8—Waltke, expansion from individual to national to universal salvation is movement of Scripture—Bible is a missionary guide concerned w bringing salvation to all families of the earth how? Gal. 3:16; ARE YOU a CHILD of ABRAHAM? Must pay cost to endure—are you seeing the cost? Willing to obey what DO know b/c greatness of One calling; see reward for those who follow? Lift your gaze to Jesus, not merely to what done or failed or given up--I wonder how many believers today realize that faith is not merely believing that Christ died for our sins. Faith is also being confident that His way is better than sin. His will is more wise. His help is more sure. His promises more precious. And His reward more satisfying. Faith begins with a backward look at the cross, but it lives with a forward look at the promises John Piper, Sermon—“How Dead people Do Battle With Sin, 1/1/95 GraceQuotes forward look? Promise? Rev. 2:17

Genesis 15:7 And He said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.”
Genesis 24:6-7 Then Abraham said to him, “Beware that you do not take my son back there! 7 “The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, ‘To your descendants I will give this land,’ He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there.
Genesis 31:53 “The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.” So Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac.
Joshua 24:2 Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.
Joshua 24:14 “Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.
1 Samuel 17:25 The men of Israel said, “Have you seen this man who is coming up? Surely he is coming up to defy Israel. And it will be that the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father’s house free in Israel.”
2 Samuel 24:17 Then David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel who was striking down the people, and said, “Behold, it is I who have sinned, and it is I who have done wrong; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let Your hand be against me and against my father’s house.”
Matthew 10:37-39 “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 “And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 “He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.
Luke 9:62 But Jesus said to him, “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”
Acts 7:2-4 And he said, “Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, 3 and said to him, ‘LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.’ 4 “Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living.
Romans 4:11 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,
Romans 15:4-6 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. 5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Galatians 3:6-8 Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.”
Galatians 3:16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as referring to many, but rather to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ.
Galatians 3:27-29 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.
Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.
Revelation 2:17 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.’