

Walking by Faith

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[0 : 0 0] Hebrews chapter 11, Hebrews chapter 11, before I get started, this week's a pretty big week, ain't it? Some of you too old to know, but school starts back. If you are working administration or faculty or staff at a school, do me a favor and stand for just a moment. Go ahead, don't be shy, don't be ashamed. Stand here for just a moment. Amen. Heroes that are put under fire often have the opportunity to make wonderful impacts on young people. I'm thankful for what you do, and go into what feels like the war zone. I am speaking at YLA this week, and I told her middle school is like a school of terrorists, you know? I mean, it's just part of it, but it's just that age in life, you know? Did I say that out loud? I guess I did, but anyway, but it's just that age in life, but I appreciate what you do, and I want to begin this morning by just praying for you and for our students, okay? Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, thank you for those who have dedicated their lives to leading, to teaching, and to staffing, feeding, cleaning after, doing whatever needs to be done for students, dear God. I'm thankful for Christians that do it. When we live in a spiritual war zone that so often focuses upon the schools, I'm thankful for those who stand for their faith, and Lord, who in the midst of their circumstances continue to be a testimony for the Lord Jesus, just in the way they live, allowing folks to see Christ through them. And so, God, I pray that you'll give endurance for the race. I pray, dear God, that you'll give strength for the times of trials. I pray, dear God, that you will do a work not only in those that lead, but God, I pray for our students. I pray, Lord, that they will live out their Christian example before others. They'll live out their faith. They won't fall into the traps that so many fall into during school age that sometimes can war on their life for a lifetime. God, I pray that you will watch over them. Help them to achieve great things, dear God, and help them, Lord, to keep their eyes upon you through it all. I love you and thank you that every time I've dropped a young'un off in my life,

I can entrust that child to you and ask you, dear God, to guide her. So, God, today, I pray that you'll do that for our schools as they start this week, dear Father. Thank you for the opportunity to lean upon you.

Thank you for the opportunity to worship. In Jesus' name, amen. This morning, I'm going to finish up talking about Abraham. We've spent a lot of time talking about Abraham, but I want to begin by telling you what we're going to talk about next week.

I'm going to begin a series called The Reality of Eternity, and I believe it is a very important series. I'm going to talk about the reality of heaven, and I'm going to talk about the reality of hell, and most of what I talk about about heaven will be the first part of that series, and the second part will be about hell. I want to encourage you to pray with me about that because it's pivotal.

A lot of people are so fascinated with heaven that they'll come and listen to a sermon about heaven when they may not come other times because they want to know about the unknown. And then there's others who need to hear the truth, the reality of hell, and some people that God has laid upon your heart, and you've wanted the opportunity to invite and can't figure out why.

[4 : 0 5] Listen, next Sunday, I'll be preaching on one minute after you die. One minute after you die. It's pivotal.

And so I encourage you to pray that God will allow you to invite somebody to come. You'll be here yourself, and that we'll start August the right way, studying the Word of God.

There's a lot of thoughts about eternity, and a lot of them are not biblical. We're going to deal with the biblical basis of what happens when we leave this life. And so I'm looking forward to that, but we ain't there yet because we're finishing up with Abraham today.

You know, there's an old woodsman's proverb that says, a tree is best measured when it's down. In other words, don't admire somebody too much too early because the proof is when it's all said and done.

A few years ago, Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, one of our six Southern Baptist seminaries that we support through the co-op program, at that school, the president and his wife wanted to honor those who had accompanied them in helping to save the Southern Baptist Convention from liberalism.

[5 : 30] And they wanted to do that by decorating their new chapel and performing arts center with stained glass windows of modern leaders of the conservative resurgence of the Southern Baptist Convention.

And they began to put these stained glass windows up. And halfway through the nearly \$2 million, six dozen window, 20 year commission, the project was stopped.

The installed windows were taken down. New leadership came into that seminary and changed what they wanted to focus on.

And many of the living legends that had already been put in stained glass have now been defamed by moral failure.

Don't immortalize people until they're mortally gone. There's still time for them to mess up. However, when the tree does come down, you can judge it with confidence.

[6 : 51] And as we walk through the life of Abraham, we walk through the life of Abraham together. Now we can see the whole story. There were rough years along the way.

There were disappointments along the way. There were bold, soul-stirring, life-changing years and eternity-influenced decisions that were made along the way that God truly blessed in.

And Hebrews 11 is what I call the, and I'm not the only one, the hall of fame of faith. It focuses on those heroes of faith that we look to and then follows that up by saying, with such a great cloud of witnesses, that's a little hint about what's coming in the coming service series.

But what a great cloud of witnesses that we're surrounded by. Run on. Keep running in the midst of that. But of all the folks that are mentioned in Hebrews 11, probably the one that's most focused on more than anybody else is Abraham because of his faith.

And he kind of sums up his life. I want us to look at that today. It's in Hebrews 11, verse 8 through 12, and it says this. By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.

[8 : 15] And he went out not knowing where he was going. By faith, he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

For he was looking to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. By faith, Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.

Therefore, from one man, and in him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

The faithfulness of Abraham's walk of faith can teach us a lot about how to live. And I want to simplify it as much as I can this morning by giving you four simple principles to live by in your spiritual walk.

The first is this. When called, go. When called, go. He went when God told him to go, and he was determined to be where God wanted him to be.

[9 : 41] And let me be clear, he did not have a God-given agenda that was placed in front of him so that he knew where he was going and what he was doing. He had no future family picture to know what was ahead.

No printout of the future. He went by faith. And when you go by faith, you trade your plan for God's plan. You set aside what you can see for what God will show you.

You exchange what you know for that that you do not know. And he went without knowing where he was going. Now this is not some pitiful little man looking for a handout or a man who didn't have anything going on at all.

When God called Abraham, Abraham was 75 years old and he was well-established. He was a rich man. He had every reason to stay exactly where he was except the fact that God told him to go.

And for a person of faith, that is enough. And on faith, he picked up and went. It is sweet to listen to somebody else do such.

[10 : 53] It's wonderful to hear that story. But let me ask you a question. If God led me and I knew that God was leading me, would I go if I didn't know where I was going?

Think about that, folks. If I could not at least anticipate what to expect with any kind of accuracy, do you step out and go?

I mean, that's tough. But that's faith. And Christians have a tendency to have a tough time to walk across the street to share their faith with a neighbor that they speak to often, let alone go to an unnamed destination.

And I want to be clear, he didn't have a prayer team that met after church down at the altar and prayed over him to go. No, not at all. He was surrounded by idol worshippers, worshipping Canaanite gods.

He didn't have that kind of support. Now, whether you have that kind of support or whether you feel like you don't have that kind of support, be clear, a walk of faith in the Lord comes without a clear roadmap.

[12 : 17] Man, I wish you'd make it clear. But you have to take it a day at a time. You walk daily with the Lord and trust him for that day because you don't know what tomorrow holds, but thank God you know who holds tomorrow.

So you rest in that. And God cultivates our faith by holding those details back. He knows what they are, but he holds those details back so he can cultivate our faith.

And that's where our blessing comes in. Now, when I say when called, go, I want to be clear about something. God didn't call Abraham to go into vocational Christian ministry.

That's not what he did. Don't you dare think that's the only calling of God upon somebody. It is not. Now, having said that, let me tell you, it is very real.

To me, it's a pretty special one. For me, it was a very clear one. I didn't know what I was going to do, but I knew what I was supposed to do. And God made that clear. And I knew when he spoke what I was to do.

[13 : 24] However, it does not stop there. He has called me in many ways at many times to do many things. And I want to be clear.

I have a relationship with the Lord. Some people don't feel comfortable with this, but he speaks to me. He does. We have a relationship. He does. Now, I realize people can say all kinds of quacky things when they say that, but I'm telling you, I believe the Holy Spirit of God indwells a believer and leads them to do what they do.

For instance, I had a man I was praying for one time, and I was burdened for him. And God laid that on my heart one night, and I picked up the phone and called this man at 10 p.m.

I don't call folks at 10 p.m. You can call me if you need to, but I don't call folks at 10 p.m. I don't do that, but God led me to do it.

I've been trying to reach him for Christ. He was stubborn. I had had the opportunity to baptize his wife. I knew she had a burden for him. I knew he needed to change his life, and I knew only Christ could do that, and so I called him.

[14 : 38] God wouldn't let me sleep because I was burdened for this man's salvation. I didn't know why it was pertinent at 10 p.m. at night, but I don't know those things. And so I did what I felt led to do, and I called him.

And I said, Chuck, God has laid you on my heart tonight, and if you'll surrender your life to the Lord tonight, I will ride over your house and meet you in your front yard and lead you to Christ.

But if you tell me no, the blood's on your head, not mine. I've done what I was supposed to do tonight.

So what do you think? He said, Preacher, come on. We stood out in our nightlight in front of his house, the whole house asleep, except me and him, standing out in the yard.

He gave his heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, and I said, Walk back in there and wake up your wife. She won't be mad at you for telling her you got saved.

[15 : 47] Go with God and trust him for the rest because God blesses such as that if you'll just lean upon him.

Faith grows through that. Faith builds on faith in your life and establishes legacies of faith. A seed of faith will grow into something that's blossoming in your life in faith.

And if you don't venture on the uncertain path of faith, you will never enjoy the joys that come with the uncertainties that come in your life due to your walk of faith.

And watching God show up and show out at the right time, but you have to have the faith to step out and acknowledge him. You have to do that to come to Christ.

And a relationship with the Lord starts by your surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. When you sense that God is stirring in your heart, that something needs to change in your life, that you can't change yourself, I want you to know that Christ came and died for your sins, for your wrongdoing that separates you from the Lord.

[17 : 03] And God, His Holy Spirit will come to us and will speak to our hearts and lives. No, it's not audible. It's louder than that. And you know it's Him speaking to you. And you know you need to come and surrender your life and give it to the Lord Jesus Christ.

That begins that relationship. And then you have the faith to continue to please God, to continue to grow in God. Abraham shows us this, that even in extreme circumstances, you ought to trust the Lord.

You ought to go with God even when you're standing on the foot of Mount Moriah, not knowing what's coming ahead, but trusting that whatever's coming, God's there. You'll be surprised where life will take you.

If you let the Lord lead you and as you look back, you'll see His hand upon you the whole time. You don't always see it at the time, but you can look back and see God's hand upon you the whole time that you never sensed at the time, but God in fact was leading you all the way.

It is rarely easy, often challenging, but so is growth and God wants us to grow. And so when He calls, whatever He calls you to do, go.

[18 : 24] Second thing I learned from Abraham's life, and I ain't focused on this a whole lot during this series, so I'm going to do it right now. When married, stay.

When married, stay. Now I want to be clear about something. The devil has a wonderful time making us feel guilty, are shamed over sin that is in our past that is under the blood of Christ.

You've had sin in your life, you put that under the blood of Christ, and He cleans the slate, and you need to let it go. Period. Period. I'm not talking about yesterday.

Whatever happened yesterday needs to be confessed, forgiven, and moved past. Don't hold it against yourself, because God don't hold it against you if you ask Him to forgive you and to cleanse you.

So I'm speaking to the current, not the past. And if you're married today, stay married.

[19 : 33] Abraham and Sarah did for over a hundred years. They put them in the Greenville News and celebrated them.

Match that. Now that ain't no piece of cake. What do you think? He was called to pick up everything in the midst of a very settled state.

And to go on direction by God to a new place. And his wife said, where are we going? And he said, I don't know. I'm looking for a city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God.

And I can just see Sarah kind of going, oh my. And where is that? And he said, honey, come on. Now that's Daniel's paraphrase, but that's what was happening. When they wanted a child, but they couldn't have one, Sarah, as she was called then, said, have one with my maidservant.

He did. That didn't go well. You know that story if you've been here a few weeks. Hagar resented her and Sarah was then mean to her and sin never works out.

[20 : 48] It never works out. Just because Scripture points out that those things happen does not mean that God justified it or that it was okay. It's a big misunderstanding about that today that things that happened in yesteryear that God gives direction and guidance through in the midst of that is somehow justified by us.

Not at all. But God speaks to where we live and what our circumstances are and how we are to respond to that. And Hagar resented her and Sarah was mean to her and sin didn't work out and it never does so don't go that route.

Twice as they traveled, Abraham told his wife to tell others that she was his sister which was a half truth and a half truth is always a whole lie but it was to be but she was to tell people that to make sure that Abraham was not killed because his wife was beautiful.

Such a philosophy led to some kind of difficulty along the way because sin always leads to difficulty. So don't go that route. When she did have eyes Abraham took him away to sacrifice him because God told him to do that.

And I guarantee you that made for tense days as well. But somehow they hung around for a hundred years together. And the closest example that I've seen of anybody of that is a couple named Herbert and Zelmyra Fisher.

[22 : 19] Herbert and Zelmyra was married 86 years. How many have been married 86 years? 86 years.

They married when Calvin Coolidge was president. They reared five children. They survived the Great Depression off a nickel a day. They reared five children through the World War II on ration supplies.

They witnessed the Korean War together. They witnessed the Vietnam War. They witnessed the Civil Rights Movement. They witnessed the passing of 15 presidents. The world changed a little bit over their time.

And a year before Herbert died, he was interviewed on Valentine's Day 2010. And they asked him, they said, Herbert, what's your secret?

What's your secret for being married 86 years? And Herbert said, there isn't a secret. It was only God that kept us together. And the next year, he went on to be with the Lord.

[23 : 24] Folks, when married, stay. Stay. Third thing is this. When commanded, obey. When commanded, obey.

I've tried to share the powerful message of Genesis chapter 22 when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son of promise. We spent two weeks evaluating the sacrifice of Isaac.

We have examined how God told him to go and do it and he went and we talked about that place, that dreaded place, how he looked to the top of that mountain and dreaded going to that place as he started that journey, as he made that climb and as he arrived.

It is amazing to me how he told his servants that he and the boy would return after they went to worship. He knew something was up, didn't know how it was all going to shake out, knew God was going to take care of it.

If he took his boy from him, he was going to bring him back. He knew it was all going to work out somehow and he bound his teenage or young adult son. Somebody asked me about that.

[24 : 27] Man, I don't know. How he placed him on the altar and then watched God provide. You want to talk about sweet worship? Think about that. Can you imagine what it was like going back down that mountain?

It is the most challenging times that we go through that sometimes lead to the greatest worship experience because the provisional hand of God is seen in the clearest and is seen the clearest in the most difficult circumstances that we face in our life.

You need to trust God. When God asks the most of you, he gives his best. When God leads you to do something, do it. When God commands, obey.

Because he has your ram waiting in a bush for the opportune time. Trust him. You won't know it's there until it's time. Honor God with your obedience and he'll honor you.

When commanded, obey. And lastly, when knocked down, get up.

[25 : 42] When life knocks you down, get up. The marriage that lasted over a hundred years ends in the death of Sarah. Abraham mourned the death of his wife and buried her the best way he could.

But God wasn't finished with Abraham. That loss in his life did not finish his life.

He turned his attention to his son, finding his son a lifelong companion. And in order for the promise of God to be carried out, Isaac needed at least one heir.

Abraham, after Sarah's death, would live another 38 years. He eventually found another woman. They had more children. As Ecclesiastes chapter 3, 1, 2 through 4 says, for everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven.

A time to be born, a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.

[27 : 01] I mention that scripture for two reasons. One is this, if you've suffered great loss in your life, I pray that you heal and the balm of the Lord will provide you a comfort and a peace that is unlike anything this world can offer.

because the only one that can feel the voyage in our life is the Holy Spirit of God. I am thankful that when I stand behind any casket I can promise a family that if they'll look to the Lord and commit their lives to Him that He'll be faithful even in the hardest time.

That He will not leave us alone. He will not forsake us. He'll come to us. That the peace that He gives us is unlike anything this world can offer to us. And I want to encourage you today to attempt to live again.

If you're here this morning God hasn't taken you home when He took your loved one home. Although it may have felt like it. But God has more for you. We need you to serve Him right alongside us.

Don't stop living until you die. The other reason I say that is this. I'm going to mingle into your business here.

[28 : 23] If you have a parent who has lost his or her spouse let them live. Let them live. Don't try to ascertain how long they need to wait to find a maid or don't try to find them one.

Let them live. Marriage should only end in death and when it does it's over. God wants us to live and honor and serve Him for all of our days.

Be faithful to your spouse until the end. Be faithful to God until the end. When life knocks you down by loss and pain and setback get up!

Get up! God wants you to live.

He wants you to live. Beat you like a yard dog. God's still on the throne folks. And He still wants you to live wholeheartedly for Him.

[29 : 29] God gave us the account of the life of Abraham for us to learn from. Not just to get some historical knowledge but to learn from.

And so let's learn from it. And when God calls, go. And when you're married, stay. And when God commands, obey.

And when you get knocked down, get up! Because that's what walking by faith is.

With every head bowed and every eye closed, it is my prayer that through the life of Abraham, I'm you'll see yourself.

Not because you've been through the same experiences that He has, but because the same God that led Him is the same God that leads you. And if you're not being led by the Lord because you don't have a personal relationship with Him, the sin and the wrongdoing that is in your life will separate you from Him.

[30 : 37] If you'll ask Him today to forgive you and to cleanse you and to come into your life and save you, He'll do exactly that. God's working in your heart in a way like that. Will you let me know? We're going to stand in just a moment.

We're going to sing. You come down this aisle and say, Pastor, I'd love to give my heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ. Pastor, I've given my heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ. Maybe you've done that privately, but you've never done it publicly.

You've never acknowledged Him through baptism publicly. We have a cool experience happening in two weeks. An outdoor baptism at Camp McCall, dinner on the grounds.

man, does it get any better? If you need to settle those matters in your life, let's do that. We've got time to deal with that. Make it right. Deal with it.

Let's make what's private public. Let's let folks know with biblical baptism what it means to live for the Lord. Maybe God's drawing you to be a part of this church.

[31 : 37] You're kind of in between. Hadn't found your place, but you know God's leading you to be here. I encourage you to come. We'd love to guide you in that process. We'll stand in just a moment.

We'll sing, and as we sing, as soon as we begin to sing, you come. Maybe you're here and you just got stuff. You've been knocked down. Or God's calling you, or God's commanding you something.

Or you're struggling with whether to stay or not. I have no idea what's going on in your life, but I know the Holy Spirit does. I truly believe he led me to be here today, to say what I said today, so he can work in your hearts and lives, and I encourage you to just be obedient to him.

I'd love to pray with you. You can pray at this altar as God leads. Just don't ever be satisfied with doing anything less than what God would have you to do. Just trust him today.

Heavenly Father, I love you. Thank you, Lord, for your love that you have for us. Guide us today, oh God, I pray to live out our faith for you. In Jesus' precious name, amen.

[32 : 49] Amen. Amen.