

Walking by Faith

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[0 : 00] Thank you, man. If you have your Bibles, I want you to turn to Genesis chapter 12. Genesis chapter 12.

One thing I love about the Word of God is that it is truth. It speaks it clearly, and even when it's not pretty or fun, even when you don't agree with it, it still speaks the truth.

It's filled with biographies, among other things, of men and women, and it shows and tells the truth.

Oliver Cromwell was a 17th century English statesman. And a hero. And he was known for his authenticity and his frankness.

And it is told that one day he set for a portrait to be painted of him. And he told the painter this. Mr. Lilly, I desire you would use all your skill to paint my picture truly like me and not flatter me at all, but remark all these roughest roughness, pimples, warts, and everything as you see me.

[1 : 32] Otherwise, I will never pay a farthing for it. Ugly or not. And in reality, all of our lives have some ugly in them.

The biographies of the Word of God shows warts and all. It tells us after Noah trusted the Lord so faithfully and built an ark in a desert before it ever rained.

Went on that ark with all those animals. When he came off that ark, he went to the vineyard. And he enjoyed himself too much.

It tells us that David was in the wrong place at the wrong time and made wrong choices. It tells us that Paul was very wrong before he became very right.

And thank God for Peter. If you've ever said anything stupid in your life and wish you hadn't, you thank God for Peter. And if you don't know that you've said anything stupid, well, pitiful.

[2 : 36] But anyway, because we all have. And Abraham in that same way is known for his soul-stirring faith, but. And over the next few weeks together, we're going to look at Abraham and look at what it means to walk by faith.

The steps of his faith. Along with, because Scripture puts it there for us, his butts along the way. Because not only does he deal with those, but so do we.

I want you to imagine, if you will, you're in the desert. You are parched in the desert. You look around and there's little hope around.

You're getting very dry and you are needing relief and you just want a sip of water more than anything else. You'd give all you had just for a drink of water and you look around and you see a water pump.

A water pump there and hanging from the pump is a canteen. And that canteen, thank God, is filled with water.

[3 : 53] And there's a sign on it. And the sign reads, beneath your feet is all the fresh, cool water you'll ever need, but the pump will not work unless it's primed with water.

And the canteen contains exactly enough water to prime the pump. Sure enough, you open the canteen and there's water in the canteen.

What do you do? How old's that note? Who wrote it?

Are they reliable? A canteen full of water sure wouldn't feel good right now, but a well, whoo! What do you do?

If you trust the sign, do you pour your life away? Abraham had a lot of decisions like that.

[5 : 11] Tough decisions. Do you keep what's in the hand or do you go after what's in the bush? Abraham believed the promises of God.

He is the quintessential model of faith even though he did not come from a strong heritage of faith. The passage we look at today says that they were in in Or and the reality is he was raised there and Stephen tells us that in the book of Acts.

And Or was known for their idolatry particularly worshipping a moon god ironically named Sin. And it is a sin to worship a moon god.

Joshua tells us that he and his family he he and the family that raised him worshipped other gods. So it was not like Abram went looking for God.

No, God came to him. And what we know most about him is his obedient faith. we know him because of his faith. However, I will tell you from the get-go it was far from perfect.

[6 : 25] It was strong faith. It was an imperfect faith. But it is here and God's word gives it to us as we march through his life together so that we can learn from it.

Not just the high points. And thank God not just the low points. But we can learn from all of it. And so today I want us to look at the call upon Abram's life.

That was his name early in his life and God changed it. The call that was placed upon him and if you're like me when you hear somebody talk about a call put upon somebody you may think if you're old fashioned like me you may think of a call upon a preacher's life.

That God's called somebody to the ministry. God's called and that is true and I believe in that and I believe that God put his hand upon me and I believe he revealed it to me so clearly.

It was a burning bush type experience for me and anytime you get down on Monday morning I go back to the call of the Lord Jesus that he placed upon my life and I believe the reason why I do what I do and why I continue to do it now right at 30 years later is because God placed a call upon my life.

[7 : 38] So I don't back up upon that at all but the reality is God's put a call on all of our lives in some form or fashion. It's not all for the same thing but he's put a call upon all of us and he wants us all to walk in faithful obedience following whatever it is that he's put there before us and how we do it may be very different but we're to do what he would have us to do.

but I'll tell you the walk of faith is where it's at. Genesis chapter 12 beginning in verse 1 says this now the Lord said to Abram go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

Don't read over that too quick. I want you to hear what the Lord told him. Go from your country from your kindred not just the family you don't like I mean all of them and your father's house and I'm not going to tell you where to go yet to the land that I will show you and I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I'll curse and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. So Abram went as the Lord had told him it's a good one to underline if you're an underliner and lot with him he was 75 years old when he departed from Haram.

God told him to leave everything as he knew it and he did and he don't always tell you to leave everything that you got to be obedient but he can but there are some characteristics of Abraham's walk of faith that is similar to us when God leads us and I want you to get that this morning to walk by faith you have this I have to you have to walk out of your comfort zone you can't stay where you're comfortable and go with God God does not always require you to leave your country but he might he don't always require you to leave your people but he might he don't always call you to leave your livelihood but he might but to walk by faith he will always lead you out of your comfort zone you cannot stay where you are and go with where God would have you you can't do both some folks need to change where they are some folks need to change who they're hanging out with some folks need to change what they're doing

[10:56] Abram had to do all of that everyone does not have to do all of that but I will assure you that walking with God will take you out of your comfort zone you cannot stay where you are and go with where God would have you to go when you surrender your life to the Lord Jesus it's a no holds barred deal there's no territory of your life that is off limits to the Lord if you're in complete obedience to following him and you're walking by faith now I will be clear about something God's not going to tell you to leave your spouse and God's not going to tell you to abandon your kids and if you come to me and tell me that's what God told me to do I'll tell you wrong God's not going to tell you to forsake all matters of sins that's not what God does as a matter of fact it's a pretty good sign when you see somebody getting a scurry and make a lot of quick rash decisions that they can't stick to that they're off course kind of like a proverb it's not not exactly a promise but it's a good wise saying to understand that when things get a little chaotic

God's not in the chaos need to take a break swallow and a breath and a prayer and see where you're at he will challenge you though he will he will touch on the things in your life that we consider untouchable he will unsettle the waters of your life he will rock your world Vance Havner put it this way he said Abraham's tent knew no secure foundations only pegs driven in the desert sand I think we have to ask ourselves how deep are my pegs driven how set am I in my ways how set am I in what I want how open am I to follow the Lord because to go with God you've got to walk out of your comfort zone and walk by faith it is a walk by faith not only that but to walk by faith we have to trust what God has for us you have to trust him

God has much more in store for Abraham than he could ever imagine but he he could not get it where he was he had to move out of his comfort zone and trust God and that's a prerequisite of the Lord you know what a prerequisite is it's in college if you take one class after another sometimes if you take English 102 you have to have English 101 and they won't let you in that class until you followed that God has prerequisites in our life and the prerequisite that he has in our life is steps of faith lead to promises but we have to follow those steps but you have to trust God and what he has for us now let's go back for just a moment and let's see where Abram came from because Genesis 11 verse 31 and 32 says this Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran his grandson and Sarai his daughter in law his son

Abram's wife and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan now let me pause there if you know anything about Old Testament history you may have heard of the Chaldeans or if mispronounced the Chaldeans whatever you want to call them but you may have heard of them they are a ruthless bunch godless known for it they're not just hanging out there that's where they're from so we're not talking about a saintly godly heritage here we're talking about somebody who's lived in the enemy's land and been one of them he travels out to go to the land of Canaan but when they came to Haran they settled there if you're an underliner that's a good place to underline they settled there the days of terror were 205 years and terror died in Haran so I want you to get this they started on their way to where God would do a mighty work in their life but they didn't get there they stopped halfway they stopped at Haran which would look like a good place to stop it's a good stopping point when we would travel from Mississippi to South

Carolina again and again after they built Buc-ee's outside of Birmingham it's a good place to stop you know not only do you have 250 gas pumps you got the cleanest restrooms in America and they are cutting brisket all the time it's a good place to stop Haran felt like that it's like the Buc-ee that's going too far but anyway it felt like that it was thought of as a promising land in itself now I want you to get this Abram didn't leave his father he brought some family with him and he stopped halfway to where he was supposed to go and interestingly enough Haran was a key city on a trade route influenced by the surrounding cities of Damascus and Nineveh and it was probably a place of abundance and an opportunity to be rich good place to stop it was also one of two key places of worship for those who worshipped the moon god

[17 : 21] I've already told you about that before whose name was five of you are listening sin there were two main spots Ur of the Chaldeans and Haran and that was where the two temples were for the moon god's sin and that's where they stopped chapter 12 sounds like the call of god came to him after they were already in Haran but that's not really the case Stephen in his powerful gospel oriented speech in Acts chapter 7 tells us that God told Abraham to leave before he ever left Ur of the Chaldeans so Abram did not leave his family as he was told and then he only went halfway to where God led him and he probably had some mixed motives along the way they stopped at Haran a supposedly prosperous place but ironically the meaning of the word in Hebrew

Haran is parched so what he thought was promising was not it was actually parched dry and spiritually fruitless now to me Haran symbolizes when we do it our way when we go with God just long enough to where it starts to get uncomfortable or when we go with God just enough when we're going to worship instead of worshiping and there is a difference it's that religion without change instead of life changing religion it's doing things halfway and I'm not going to tell you what my high school football coach called that it's not getting it done and let me be very clear I believe anything that we do individually for the Lord Jesus Christ we shouldn't do it halfway we ought to do it all the way and pick his first

Baptist church as a church of Jesus Christ committed to the cause of Christ I don't think anything we do ought to be halfway I believe he deserves our best and I believe anything we put our name to we ought to give it everything we got for the honor and the glory of God amen amen I'll let you sign up in the foyer never go halfway with God it will not be fruitful it's not like you get half the fruit no no no you miss out it's not fruitful you'll spend way too much time in unfruitful territory and Abraham did not leave Haran until he was 75 years old he stayed there too long folks once his father was gone he moved on sometimes the things you dread the most frees you up the most sometimes the transitions in your life that you absolutely dread are the very things that

God can use to propel you to the next level anybody that is more important to you or whose opinion weighs out more than the influence of God is an idol to you and it is not that person's fault even though they may enjoy being in that position it is not that person's fault it is your fault because we have to give up those idols we must remove our own idols to get to the place that God would have us to be in order to be used of God we've got to walk by faith and the only way we can do that is to step out of our comfort zone and to trust God for what he has for us and then also to let God have his way in our life now somebody is going to tell me afterwards about the sovereignty of God I agree he can do anything he wants and that's true but he's a gentleman and he doesn't force his way he gives us a chance he initiates it and gives us a chance and when we follow it he blesses our lives he told

Abraham who's called Abram here he said when you do this verse 2 and 3 says and I will make you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great so that you'll be a blessing I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I'll curse and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed what God tells him sounds impossible because the man is 75 years old he has no children and his wife has been barren and he lives in a barren parched land not exactly great but God says I'm going to make you a great nation but God says I'm going to bless you but God says I'll make you a blessing God does the work when we walk by faith he also spoke of protecting him he also spoke of blessing people through him if I understand that correctly all the families of the earth shall be blessed that sounds like us folks that we're blessed because somebody thousands of years ago walked by faith with

[23 : 20] God none of that is possible until we surrender go all the way with the Lord and when we do the potential is beyond our imagination but you say but pastor I would commit but I don't know what's coming I don't know that I can you know the only one that knows what's coming is the one who will lead you to follow him and he's also the one that will empower you to do whatever he's asked you to do and if you don't know if you can I will clearly tell you you cannot nor can I that's why God said you will be a blessing I'll make you a blessing I'll do the blessing and I'll make you great it is not until we sacrifice our ways for his that we ever tap into what

God really has for us and I will tell you in Haran Abraham didn't tap into it it wasn't until there was a death and a transition that Abram really found his next level that's a walk of faith not that you know what's on life's path ahead of you but that you know the one that promises that he'll level your path the one that promises he'll straighten your path the one that promises he'll light your path not that you know what tomorrow holds but thank God that you know who holds tomorrow and that you can trust him today for whatever tomorrow may hold there was a letter a note more so found in the office of a young pastor in

Zimbabwe a few years ago and it said this I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed I have the Holy Spirit power the die has been cast I've stepped over the line the decision has been made I'm a disciple of his I won't look back I won't let up I won't slow down I won't back away or I won't be still my past is redeemed my present makes sense my future is secure I'm finished and done with low living sight walking smooth knees colorless dreams tamed colorless dreams and tame visions worldly talking and cheap giving and dwarf goals I no longer need preeminence prosperity position promotions praise or popularity

I don't have to be right or first are tops are recognized are praised are regarded are rewarded I now live by faith I lean in his presence I walk by patience am lifted up uplifted by prayer and I labor with power my face is set my gate is fast my goal is heaven my road is narrow my way is rough my companions are few my guide is reliable and my mission is clear I cannot be bought compromised detoured lured away turned back deluded or delayed I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice hesitate in the presence of the enemy pander at the pool of popularity or meander in the maze of mediocrity I will not give up shut up let up until I have stayed up stored up prayed up paid up preached up for the cause of Christ

I am a disciple of Jesus I must go till he comes give till I drop preach till all I know and work till he stops me and when he comes for his own he will have no problem recognizing me my banner will be clear they found that in the desk of a young pastor in Zimbabwe after he was martyred for his faith God does not want you to die for him he wants you to live for him and the only way to do that is to walk by faith go and he'll guide you come and he'll lead you with every head bowed and every eye closed

[28 : 36] I want to ask you this morning what is it that's holding you back from giving God your very best primarily has there ever been a time in your life when you surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ when you said Lord I know that I'm a sinner I know that I have done wrong and I know that I need forgiveness from you and I ask you to come into my life and to change me today if that has never happened to you I got good news for you today's the day of salvation we serve a God that's the same yesterday today and forever and he will save you today and if you feel any impelling toward that at all I want you to know you didn't come up with that on your own he's guiding you in that this part of our worship is designed for you to respond to him and for us to guide you in that process so as we stand and sing in just a moment I encourage you to come as God leads you maybe you're here and you do know you're a Christian but the reality is your life does not reflect it or at least there's parts of your life that don't reflect it maybe you've went halfway maybe you've not trusted wholly will you lay that down before the

Lord today I'm here to pray for you you may use these steps as a makeshift altar to lay down your life to the Lord to start afresh and anew with him I don't know how God's leading you but I encourage you to be faithful to do what he tells you to do you may be here and God's drawing you to be a part of this fellowship you know that God is leading you to be a part of this church we'd love to guide you in that process I encourage you to just follow what God would have you do maybe you made a private decision for the Lord but you never made that public and I will tell you that when you miss the first step of obedience being baptism it will hinder your spiritual life so if you look back over your life and you realize I have committed my life to Christ but since that time I have never been baptized as a believer I want you to know that is the first step of obedience and it can be a tremendous hindrance in your life and by you coming not only will it bless your life but it will bless others as well just obey him just trust him whatever God whatever I know it's outside your comfort zone that's when it gets good folks outside your comfort zone

Lord Jesus I love you and I thank you for your word thank you for the challenge of it dear God and I pray today Father you'll lead us to be obedient in whatever you'd have us to do we love you dearly in Jesus precious name amen stand together