

A Faith Like No Other
Hebrews 11:7-12

Romans 4
Ezekiel 14
Responsive Genesis 15:1-6

This week we are going to continue our journey through chapter 11, picking up where we left off last week here at verse 7, as the Author continues to list this hall of fame sort a speak of the faithful who have come before. These in whom we have examples as to what true faith looks like, even in the face of some of life's toughest challenges.

Let us read this morning, starting out in verse 1, reading to 12. Here in verse 7, we see our third example of faith, following Abel and Enoch. Unlike those first 2, we have a rather extensive account of Noah in the book of Genesis. In the account of Noah, it is written that he was righteous man, and blameless in his generation, and that he was one who walked with God. Much like Enoch, he was blessed with this close relationship and communion with God. Even the prophet Ezekiel spoke of the righteousness of Noah which we read this morning.

1 Peter mentions Noah, and his faithful ministry to the lost during the years it took to build the ark. Warning the sinful people of the coming judgment. The account in Genesis says, that the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, the earth was corrupt, and evil, filled with violence.

This is the backdrop of Noah's faith, a world which was dark, and lost to the point that God only saved 8 people. We don't know the population of the earth at that time, but only 8 were saved, because of their faith and trust in God.

Imagine if God told you to build an ark today, what kind of ridicule and scorn you would get. It was no different for Noah, yet, he remained faithful, trusted God, and continued to witness and warn of the coming judgment despite the mockery and ridicule.

As we had mentioned last week, noticing the mention of Abel, and Enoch, it says that God was pleased in them because of what they had done. It was faith, put to action, not mere words, or mere assent, these are not men who just merely said, ya, I believe in God....but had no real fruit, or works showing forth and attesting of that claim. These are men whose actions proved their faith. Noah, building an ark because God told him he would bring rain and destroy the wicked people. And it took years.

The building of the Ark is a dramatic demonstration of Noah's faith. This is the same faith that the Author here mentioned in verse one, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Noah was given no evidence outside of God's word for what he should prepare for, yet, he operating out of faith, believed God and followed God's instruction.

The faith of Noah in some ways worked to condemn the world, for by it he was saved, and in their denial and mockery they were destroyed. As the Author here says, because of this faith, this faith of substance and action, this faith believing God in the impossible, despite the persecution to yet minister a way of salvation to the lost people. Because of this faith, he is accounted in Scripture as an example of faith.

What a ministry eh? Spending years warning and witnessing to only have each and every person destroyed except of those in your own household. I think this just goes to show God's sovereignty in salvation. Without the work of God, no one will believe, no one will listen, for the simple fact that if you are not given the gift of faith from God, you are not able, or willing to listen or believe.

Because of Noah's faith, which is given by God, not from any power that mankind has, he was found righteous and one who will share in the inheritance with Christ. The inheritance of the righteous is bound in Christ himself, as Aquinas said, "No one in any age, at any time, is saved except through faith in Christ and on the basis, either anticipated or fulfilled, of his mediator work. Christ is indeed the Heir it is he, and none other whom the Father has appointed as Heir of all things. Noah, as well as all other heir's of righteousness are only made so by being one with Christ.

If, Christ is indeed the heir of all things, if everything is bound in him, that means there is no inheritance remaining for others unless they come to him in faith. If he is all, and has all, then there is nothing left outside of him. But as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, those of us who are in Christ, God has given us all things For all things are yours, and you are Christs, and Christ is God's

This reality should be a massive encouragement to us for the faith that we have been gifted, to believe and to share in the inheritance of the one who has inherited it all, there really is nothing more glorious than that truth. Who are we to begrudge what God has given us? Is he not a loving God? He has given us salvation, he has made us to love, he has given us a hope beyond hope, will he not also take care of us? Will he not also provide for us?

Another interesting detail in the story of Noah, is that the means of salvation, and them means of judgment was the same. The saving of his household, and the condemnation of the world took place at the same time, and in the same means. The flooding which was judgment upon the unbelieving and sinful world which brought death and destruction, was also the same flood and waters that kept the ark afloat.

It is the same with the gospel, the word which has the power to bring about salvation, also has a condemning power to those who reject it. As Paul said again in 2 Corinthians, "To one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to another the aroma of life leading to life." This is the fate of the faithful, this is the ministry we have, and this is the effect of the word of God on the world. The same word both gives life, and brings death, in the same way the flood waters brought salvation to Noah and his family, and death to all others who did not repent and turn.

This also stands as a warning to the second coming of Christ. For it to will be the same, one event, one moment that will be the fulfillment of our inheritance in Christ, and the righteous punishment of the sinful who rebelled against him. As Christ said, recorded in Matthew, " But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But a in the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also is the coming of the Son of Man."

No second chances, when God sealed that door behind Noah, judgment was signed and sealed. Time was up, judgment has come. God required faith, and believing his word, when you finally see the substance when you see his word fulfilled and then you believe, it is is not faith, it is to late. When Christ comes, when all see his marvelous, and terrible arrival, there will be no last minute confessions, for seeing is not faith, believing without seeing is faith. And as we see in this hall of the faithful, it is their faith which merited them the inheritance, it was not when God proved himself, but it was in the believing that God would do as he said, and as he promised. In this final event for humanity, All will meet God, all will see him..and those who are not covered by the blood of Christ, will not see God as savior, but will see him as judge.

Now switching a little bit, going to verse 8, we see the mention of Abraham. Now this book being written to believing Hebrews, they would be very familiar with Abraham being the physical descendants. Even though we see this line of faith is drawn back to the beginning, drawn back even to Abel in the first few verses, the man Abraham is of upmost importance in the spiritual line of God's children.

For it is to Abraham that God promised an heir, a son, even when they were well beyond child bearing age. But not only that, God told Abraham, that by his seed, all the nations shall be blessed. God chose the lineage of Abraham to bring forth his own Son into this world, to be the fulfillment and the heir of all things. And it is Abraham's faith, it is his response to God's word and promise which we see in Genesis says, "he believed the Lord, and was accounted as righteous." It was not his works, it was his faith. He believed God, and it was accounted as righteousness. Just as Paul wrote in Romans 4 that we read this morning, "What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace, but as debt, but to him who does not work but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness"

Abraham is honored as the father of all who believe, as Galatians 3:9 says " so then those who are of faith, are blessed with believing Abraham." And these as Paul says, are Abraham's offspring, heirs of the promises given to him, the faithful are the inheritors of the eternal inheritance. A nation of God's children whose number is greater than the sands in the sea, or the stars in the sky. The reverse of this though, is that if you are not in the line of Abraham, by faith, then you are not an inheritor of the heavenly promises. Justification is not by physical lineage, being right with God has nothing to do with nationality, or station, but to be a true member of God's family, to be a part of the true Israel is to be one with the faith of Abraham.

This is the faith that is given to us, this is the faith which is a gift of God. This is the faith that caused Noah to build an ark, a boat like none has ever seen, and to endure scorn and ridicule and mockery for 120 years, this is the faith of Abraham, who was told to pack up all his belongings and go to the land that God would show him, to move everything without knowing the destination. The faith to believe that God would deliver when he promised a son to him, though his wife was barren, the faith that believed when God told him to sacrifice his only son Issac, this son of promise, that God would even resurrect him from the dead if need be.

This example we have here of Abraham teaches us that true faith always leads to a decisive action, that trust will manifest itself in obedience, and that such works are the evidence of faith. This is what the book of James means when he says that faith apart from works is dead. As Calvin says of Abraham leaving to go to an unknown land, "it is no ordinary trial of faith to give up what we have in hand in order to seek what is afar off and unknown to us."

Again this falls in line with verse 1, faith being the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Abraham set out in faith, his destination unknown but he also set out in hope knowing that God said he was going to his inheritance. He acted upon nothing else, but the word of God.

As Luther wrote. "This is the glory of faith, simply not to know; not to know where you are going, not to know what you are doing, not to know what you must suffer, and with sense and intellect, virtue and will, all alike made captive to follow the naked voice of God. Abraham with his obedience of faith shows the highest example of the evangelical life, because he left all and followed the Lord. Preferring the word of God to everything else and loving it above all things, of his own free will a pilgrim, and subject to the perils of life and death every hour of the day and night. "

One of the interesting facts about Abraham and his faith, was that he did not have the prophets, or examples of previous faithful men to lean upon, in fact we find out in the book of Joshua, that Abraham comes from a lineage of pagans, who worshiped other Gods. Yet, God chose him, took him out of that, and lead him to a foreign land in which he was a stranger and a foreigner, this land that he was to inherit, when he arrived in this land of promise he was already old and was still childless. Even after Issac and Jacob were born, his family still lived as pilgrims, in tents not owning any land, in fact it is noted that even when his wife Sarah died, he had to purchase land so that he could bury her.

Abraham never laid claim to the land, he remained a migrant, a stranger in this land which was promised. Yet he is the forefather of the Israelite, who God would one day bring to this land and fulfill his promise to Abraham. Abraham's life was marked by a powerful, and unwavering faith. A faith that perseveres, think upon this for a moment. Abraham waiting his whole life for the fulfillment of the promise that he would inherit this promised land, and it did not happen in his life....yet he remained faithful trusting God at his word. I think there is a pretty large life lesson of faith in there for us as well.

It was by this faith that Abraham learned to look beyond his present fleeting moments, and to look ahead to the eternal blessings which God had prepared for him, and as Paul says in Romans 8. To count the sufferings of this present time unworthy of the comparison with the glory to come. Abraham lived his life with the reality that the fulfillment of his inheritance was not yet, the fact that he lived in tents points to the fact that he had no foundation in this world, his hope was not truly of this world but of the inheritance to come after, Abraham's true hope was looking to that city whose builder and maker is God.

Our life, in many ways reflects Abrahams. For we to are nothing more then pilgrims and wanderer's in this world. As we get older we recognize more and more the temporary nature of this world. We are faced with death, with change and uncertainty. We may be outcasts, and hated by our own friends and family because of our faith, we maybe uprooted as Abraham, called to leave all behind to go to new strange lands. We like Abraham live in this already, but not yet state. Our inheritance in the promises bound in Christ are as sure as to be fulfilled right now at this moment, but our inheritance like Abraham is not truly of this world, our inheritance of eternal life in the promised land, in the city whose builder and maker is God, in which we are heirs of that kingdom, we are son's and daughters of Abraham through faith, a part of God's chosen, the spiritual nation of Israel, his set apart, holy nation.

Abraham lived his life in faith, and remained faithful that God would provide all that he promised, and those of us who are of this same faith should live the same. Having our eyes fixed upon the eternal, upon the glories of our God and savior. We should be ones who are known for remaining faithful despite the scorn and ridicule of the world around us, we should be ones who are known to endure such as Noah did for 120 years from the time he received the words of God, to that first drop of rain.

We are ones who look to our eternal inheritance, counting the suffering of this world as nothing in comparison to the blessings to follow as Abraham did. Again this faith is a faith of substance, it is weighty, it has meaning and purpose it is not just mere words, or a term used to describe a sense of hope. The gift given to those who are in Christ, is a faith bound in the promises of the eternal, holy, sovereign God of all, who gave all to his Son as in inheritance that we share in because of the atoning work on the cross applied to us.

I will close this morning by reading the last few verses of Chapter 10 here in Hebrews, starting in verse 35. "Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he who is coming will come and not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith, but if anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul!

