

ROADMAP OF FAITH

Introduction

The Bible says that we are *saved by grace through faith* (Eph 2:8).

...that *from first to last, “The righteous will live by faith.”* (Rom 1:17)

⁶ *And without faith it is impossible to please God* (Heb 11:6)

Faith is fundamental to Christianity...

both to coming to faith and living by faith.

I. **[So] What is faith?**

The Hebrew writer lays it out for us so that there is no confusion:

¹ *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for* (Heb 11:1).

Faith means:

You are sure that what God says is true
even though there is nothing concrete to prove its existence.

But you are certain it's there
because the unseen is more real to you than the seen.

That's why the Bible almost always speaks of someone's faith.

The faith of Abel...
The faith of Enoch...
The faith of Noah...
The faith of Abraham.

Hebrews 11 says...

⁴ By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. (Heb 11:4)

By faith Abraham left his land and his people and started toward Canaan.

That's how we know that faith is the linkage between what God says and what we do.

When we link God's will to our life situation, we are faithful.

However, a failure to link what God says to our situation is faithlessness.

The Christian life is not only about learning about God but learning to think and act like God.

II. **[So] What Does Faith Look Like?**

When was the last time you tried to find an address without looking at a map?

You typically find yourself wondering around until you finally stop and ask someone for directions.

Then you have to look at the road signs to get your bearings to know if you're in the right place or not.

God knows we can't find our own way to heaven so He provided us directions and a number of signs along the road.

He didn't just create a set of rules and say,
“Here, do this and you'll be faithful.”

Instead, He has given us a roadmap or a profile of faith.

And perhaps we can most clearly see it in the life of Abraham, the man of faith.

⁶ *Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”* ⁷ *Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.* ⁸ *The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”* ⁹ *So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (Gal 3:6-9)*

Abraham was a man rich in promises (Heb 11:17)

Did you catch that?

(God's promises are the first sign along the road of life.)

Promises. Think God's Promises.

God spoke to Abram openly about what He wanted to do for him:

¹ *The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.*

² *“I will make you into a great nation
 and I will bless you;*

*I will make your name great,
 and you will be a blessing.*

³ *I will bless those who bless you,
 and whoever curses you I will curse;
 and all peoples on earth
 will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:1-3)*

Later in verse 7 God promises Abram:
 at least one child,
 and a land of inheritance for all his descendents.

Like Abraham we have been given promises from God as well.

Remember from last week that 2 Peter 1:4 speaks of the:

“great and precious promises” God gives us
 in order to participate in His divine nature
 and escape the corruption of the world.

Verse 3 tells us that these *promises*
 are the outgrowth of his *divine power*,
 so that we will have everything we need for both *life and godliness*.

We depend upon so many of these promises:

that God will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5),
 that He will meet all our needs (Philippians 4:19),
 that He will provide our food and clothing (Matthew 6:25-32).

III. **Facing Contradictions to the Promises**

But life can be just so confusing at times
 because we have to face the contradictions to the promises.

I mean, we try to serve God and stuff happens.

What do you say to someone whose child is diagnosed with cancer?
 What do you do when you are injured in a car wreck?
 How do you deal with divorce and the death of a loved one?

We see God's promise to provide and take care for us,
 but somehow stuff happens.

We see the same thing in life of Abraham.

God promised him he'd be the father of many nations

- but he's old,
- his wife is sterile,
- and he thinks his servant will be his heir.

So God speaks to him in Genesis 15:4
and makes a covenant with him
telling him that an heir would come from his own body.

But the contradictions are so strong!

So Sarah and he decide to resolve the contradiction themselves.

They see God's promise
but the physical inconsistencies are just too much.

So Abraham and Hagar have a son the natural way.

They understand the natural dynamics of childbearing:

A old man and a young fertile woman can still have babies.

But an old man and a sterile woman can't.

So they do it their own way...
God isn't pleased
and doesn't speak to them for 13 years.

After 13 years, when Abraham is 99 years old,
God appears to him again under the trees at Mamre
and promises him a son by this time next year.

¹⁵ *God also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶ I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”*

¹⁷ *Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” ¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!” (Genesis 17:15-18)*

Abraham had the promise of God.

But everything that Abraham could see and measure told him that this was impossible.

Here’s the second sign along the road of life:

Beware of Contradictions.

We have to deal with the contradictions to the promises.

You see, Abraham had the promises,
but the contradictions he saw,

--his age,
Sarah’s age and sterility,
perhaps even a loss of hope--

led him to not rely on God to resolve the situation,
but led him to think that he ought to do it.

Do you ever do that?

Do you ever think that you’re the key to resolving the problem?

This is such a temptation!

The reason why we fail
is because we let the contradictions define the situation.

This is a no-no! A big no-no!

- The Hebrews at the Red Sea (Exod 14)
- The Hebrews in the desert without food (Exod 16)
- Daniel when Arioch, the captain of the king's guard was sent to kill all the wise men (Dan 2). He didn't try to manipulate the situation but asked for time and went to pray with Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

God's power completely overcame
Abraham and Sarah's physical ironclad contradictions.

- God's power completely overcame physical obstacles at the Red Sea.
- The lack of food in the desert
- And the salvation of Daniel and his three friends.

They simply melted away!

God respects our faith and creates our experience.

In a nutshell that's faith!

Here's what I want you to see at this juncture:

The promises of God and the contradictions that followed **were real**.

- Sarah was too old.
- Abraham's body was as good as dead (Rom 4:18)
- but apparently that doesn't mean anything.

That's not the end of the road.

There's still yet another sign along the road
to lead us in the right direction
that reads,

Divine Resolution.

IV. The Divine Resolution

The resolution is actually built into faith. We just can't see it.

Faith has 3 parts:

1. The part you see,
2. the part you don't see
3. and the link between the two.

If we live and act as if only the seen existed,
we don't have biblical faith.

That why it helps to see that
the Profile of Faith is a sequence of 3 parts.

- The Promise
- The Contradiction
- The Divine Resolution

Let me show you what I mean.

In Genesis 12 God promises Abram that:

- He would make him into a great nation
- and all peoples of the earth would be blessed through him.

In Genesis 15 God makes a covenant with Abram
saying only that he would have an heir.

In Genesis 17 God promises him that his son would come from Sarah.

In Genesis 21 we read,

¹ Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. ² Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. (Gen 21:1-2)

Here we see the obvious sequence:

- God promises Abram a son.
- Abraham and Sarah have to deal with the contradictions.
- God resolves the contradictions just like He said He would.

Here are seven things we should do when we find ourselves in the contradictions.

1. Elevate the promise above the contradictions.

In the midst of a contradiction,
we must stay close to the Lord and remember His promises.

2. Don't let the contradiction define the situation.

Trials are not about the situations themselves
but about how we respond to them:

- opportunities to let God work,
- to build our faith,
- to triumph.

3. Look for the resolution.

God doesn't put us in situations
just to leave us there and let us squirm.

He has a plan and a reason for everything He does.

Abraham learned this and was ready to obey God when He told him to sacrifice his only son.

4. **Learn to think non-naturally.**

This is what Abraham did in Genesis 22.

He said to his servants,

⁵ Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”

He reasoned that he could burn the meat of Isaac’s bones and that God would resurrect his son from the dead!

Now that’s non-natural! That’s why he ‘s called the man of faith.

5. **Wait.**

The most often-repeated commandment in the Bible is to wait on the Lord, yet it is probably one of the hardest for us to keep.

We want to take action,

We want to solve our own problems,

We don’t want to be accused of being lazy or uncaring.

But God tells us to wait!

6. **Look to the Lord.**

A contradiction is a training ground to teach us to look up.

James 5:13 says, *Is any of you in trouble? He should pray.*

That’s the focus we should have.

7. **Rejoice.**

Why?

We've been counted worthy to be treated like God's true sons and daughters.

And that's the greatest blessing of all!

Summary and Closing:

We rejoice because we *get* to walk in the footsteps of Abraham.

We *get* to share in both the sufferings and glory of Jesus.

And we *get* to be examples for our brothers and sisters.

To Him be all the praise and honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Invitation