

Hebrews 11

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Outline 5

ABEL'S BETTER SACRIFICE

1st week of November

Heb. 11:4:-

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” Compare also Gen. 4.

As the writer of Hebrews 11 leads us down the long corridors of the Hall of Heroes he mentions Abel first of all. Abel was killed for his faith, and his case is the first clear and outstanding illustration of faith as the substance of things not seen, the evidence of things hoped for.

We ought to note that the text draws a comparison between the two men, one of whom possessed faith while the other did not. Naturally if we possess the faith that is an evidence of things not seen we will reveal this in our lives. Faith must manifest itself for it is a life principle, and so he that possesses it is controlled not merely by the world he sees but also and much more, by the unseen world of spiritual things. *How* Cain revealed that he did not have faith, and how Abel revealed that he possessed it is shown in the present passage.

ABEL IN CONTRAST TO CAIN

Cain and Abel were brothers. It has been suggested- and it is not impossible- that they were twin brothers like Jacob and Esau.

The conjecture rests upon the fact that in Gen. 4 we do not read before the birth of Abel the customary words, “And Adam knew his wife” while these words are used in connection with Seth’s birth. If this conjecture be true, then the spiritual antithesis would be brought in the domain of the closest brotherly relationship conceivable, the same as in the case of Jacob and Esau.

It is certain that Cain was endowed with the greater natural gifts. He must have been physically the stronger, as his murder of Abel would seem to indicate. This may also be concluded from the names of the two sons: Eve calls the first, “Cain”, and says “I have gotten a man from the Lord”, while the second son calls to her mind the frailty and vanity of human existence and she called him Abel, breath or vanity, weakling. This may also be gathered from their occupations- Abel chose the quiet pilgrim life of a shepherd, but Cain turned to the earth to grapple with the curse of the ground and to labor toward the development of the things of the world. These same traits of Cain become evident in his generations, for his children are men of power and talent who focus their attention upon the world’s business to become famous and powerful. This difference between the first two sons is also characteristic of all history. It is not the children of God generally who are endowed with the greater natural gifts. The strong and the

noble are usually not found in the circle of God's people. And this is undoubtedly so, because it is God's purpose to put to naught the wise and great things, that no flesh may glory before him.

From a spiritual point of view we must remember three things. First of all, Cain as well as Abel belonged in the historic, external sense of the word, to God's covenant people, even though Cain was a stranger to its fellowship and life. Both were born of covenant parents and as such were in the external sense of the term covenant children. Both had the same direct traditions and revelations, and the same training. Secondly, we may also add that Cain and Abel both were religious men, at least apparently. This is often forgotten, and the impression left that Cain was the sort of a man who if he were living today would be put behind the prison bars. However, this conception is evidently wrong. Essentially, of course, he was a wicked person and there was a fundamental difference between Abel and him. But he was not what we would call in everyday terminology a criminal. As a matter of fact, he was so religious that he also brought an offering to the Lord. In Gen. 4 Cain is even mentioned first in this respect. Therefore Cain must be classed with people who wish to be considered as those that fear God. Thirdly, we must not overlook the fundamental difference between the two brothers. The difference was as great as that between light and darkness, between faith and unbelief; Abel was a child of grace and Cain was not. Abel saw things which Cain did not spiritually perceive; Abel hoped for things Cain was not interested in. Surely what Abel perceived was his own sin, God's righteousness and wrath, and the promise of redemption. Adam and Eve must have spoken of the coming of sin, Abel believed while Cain mocked the reality of sin. Cain did not admit God's righteousness and wrath upon him, but Abel did. As to the promise, Abel surely believed and hoped on it, while Cain had no need of it and despised it.

HIS BETTER SACRIFICE

The words "a more excellent sacrifice" taken *by themselves* could be taken to mean that Cain's offering was also good, but Abel's was better. The difference then would be a purely relative one- both did good, but Abel did the better of the two. Of course, you understand at once that this cannot be the interpretation. It cannot be for various reasons. The continuation of the text definitely states that Abel alone received the testimony that he did well, which could not have been the case if the difference were merely relative. Furthermore, the truth expressed in vs. 6 that without faith it is impossible to please God preclude such an interpretation. And, finally, in the light of Gen. 4 it is evident that God was not at all pleased with Cain's abominable sacrifice. We state all this because in our day the theory of common grace as propounded in some circles would exactly have us believe that Cain's offering is in some sense good. Mention is made that Cain still sacrificed, that he sacrificed to God and not to idols, and that in so far he must then be better than the heathen. Those that thus reason forget that the knowledge of God had not yet that far been changed into the idolatry of heathenism. Cain could not yet have sacrificed to an idol of wood and stone. Certainly, he made an idol of God in his own mind when he imagined that he could please God with his sacrifice while maintaining his wicked unbelief. Finally, the Scriptures do not speak favorably of the sacrifices of the wicked. Compare Prov. 15:8, 29.

But why was Abel's the better sacrifice? According to some, the difference was merely one of subjective attitude. Then the objective sacrifices were in themselves on a par, it was only that one brought the offering in faith while the other came with his own works. It seems to us, that the difference was not only one of the subjective attitude in which the sacrifices were

brought but also of the very *matter* of the sacrifices. Abel offered a lamb, that is, a *bloody* sacrifice, and thereby he showed faith in the sacrifice of Christ. He understood that without shedding of blood there is no remission, and he expressed his own unworthiness and faith in the coming Christ by bringing this sacrifice. Cain did not believe; he acted on the basis of his own works and gifts by which he sought his righteousness before God. It is true he was no shepherd but he could nonetheless have easily secured a lamb. He did not, for he did not believe in blood theology. Thus the very sacrifices that were brought showed that Abel longed after the righteousness of God, while Cain revealed himself as ungodly.

THE TESTIMONY ABEL RECEIVED

Abel obtained witness that he was righteous. Just how he received this we do not know. The text does not say that the smoke of his sacrifice wafted to heaven, while that of Cain's hovered near the ground. Certain it is that he received some sort of an outward testimony that he was righteous, of which Cain was also aware. He received it by faith. By faith he offered, by faith he also received and accepted the testimony of his righteousness. The meaning is not, of course, that Abel felt himself personally better and without sin; but that before God in the sacrifice of which his lamb was typical he obtained righteousness, and carried the assurance thereof in his heart by faith.

By that faith, being dead, he yet speaketh. Abel must have spoken to Cain and explained to him that his wicked sacrifice could not be pleasing to God. Cain rejected his testimony, and in unbelief and hatred killed his righteous brother. But Abel, being dead, yet speaketh. By his faith he still testifies against the wicked and their sacrifices, and cries to the righteous to seek their righteousness in the blood of Christ. He testifies against all humanistic, self-willed religion. Dying under Cain's anger he maintained that only in the blood is there righteousness. And God still gives him testimony even after his death. For he sent Cain forth under the curse. Abel had the victory. But only *by faith*.

QUESTIONS: Compare Cain and Abel from a natural viewpoint as to their capacities and talents. In what sense was Cain a covenant child? Why must Cain be classed among nominal children of God? Why cannot Cain's sacrifice have been relatively good in the sight of God? What in your opinion was the difference in sacrifice—merely one in attitude or also one evident in the matter of sacrifice itself? What is meant by “being dead, he yet speaketh?” Are there Cain-like sacrifices in the church today?

Outline 6

ENOCH'S PLEASING GOD

2nd week of November

Heb. 11:5:-

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. Compare Gen. 5:21-24.

As a second illustration of faith as the evidence of things hoped for, the writer mentions Enoch. Undoubtedly there were many believers after Abel and before Enoch, but Enoch is chosen because he undoubtedly stood head and shoulders above them all. Three times you read of Enoch in Scripture: first, in Gen. 5:21-24; then, here in Heb. 11; finally, in Jude 14, 15. Each of these passages ought to be carefully read to a proper understanding of the case of Enoch.

WHEN HE PLEASSED GOD

If you ask, when did Enoch please God? the passage of Heb. 11 answers, “before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God”. Just how Enoch received this testimony the Bible does not state. Perhaps God spoke directly to him, as he frequently did in that day. Enoch was a prophet (according to Jude) and it is not impossible that he received immediate revelations from God. However it took place, Enoch had it and believed it. He carried the testimony about with him that for Christ’s sake he was acceptable and that his walk was a sweet savor before God. Whatever then others said to him and of him, Enoch was assured in his own heart that God accepted him. Note, he had this testimony “before his translation”, that means during his life-time and sojourn on earth. That does not mean for only a few of the last years of his life either, for Gen. tells us that after he begat his son he walked with the Lord yet three hundred years, and all this time he certainly had this testimony. We might in passing emphasize that it is this testimony that we please God which the Christian must have here in this life. We can have it only by faith.

To get a correct conception of Enoch and his significance, we must try to get a picture of the times in which he lived. First of all, then, Scripture makes known that he belongs to the period of history prior to the flood. He represented the seventh generation from Adam. Reckoning on the basis of the figures of Gen. 5, when Enoch was born, his father, grand-father, and great-grandfather were not only living, but even Adam. The latter died only some 65 years prior to Enoch’s translation. Enoch was of Seth’s descendants, that is, of the generation that feared God. Secondly, the days in which he lived were days of rapidly developing apostacy and error. He was a contemporary of the wicked Lamech and his famous but ungodly sons. The amalgamation of the children of God with the sons of men (Cain’s generation) was already going on. Sin was on the increase, and the world was rapidly becoming ripe for judgment. In the 365 years of his earthly life he must have seen much departure. Not only the wanton speech of Lamech to his wives in Gen. 4:23, 24 but also the strong language used in Jude 14, 15 to characterize the ungodliness corroborate this picture. As a prophet in this departing time Enoch had the testimony by faith that he pleased God.

HOW HE PLEASSED GOD

Enoch pleased God by faith. Gen. 5 says that he “walked with God”. This expression refers first of all to a most intimate communion with God. Enoch was God’s friend and he clung to God with a living faith. The expression does not imply a sort of mystical, selfish communion with God. On the contrary, it implies that he was of God’s party over against the wicked world. As God’s friend, he defended the honor of his God and condemned the ungodliness of his age.

He witnessed, according to Jude, that the Lord would come to execute judgment. This he did by faith and by faith alone. Who could see the coming judgment day with his natural eye? Enoch was convinced of it by faith. When everything seemed to be going on as usual, he spoke of the judgment although it was still centuries before the flood. He was convinced that God rewards men according to their works. Faith was the substance of things not seen, the evidence of things hoped for.

HIS TRANSLATION

There can be no question of it, but translation means that Enoch was taken from this earth to heaven without first seeing death. He was not, for God took him. Very likely, he was snatched from this earth when the wicked were ready to put him to death for his hateful prophecies. They sought him to kill him, but “he was not found”. Certainly his generation knew also that they failed to find him *because God had taken him*, and so his translation was a testimony of God against the wicked world and to his faith. This translation was the very climax of the testimony that he pleased God.

QUESTIONS: Just when did Enoch live? How long was it after creation, and how long before the flood? Characterize the world of Enoch’s day. What does it mean that Enoch “walked with God?” Can you see any reason why God translated Enoch without death rather than taking him to heaven by the way of death?

Outline 7

FAITH AND PLEASING GOD

3rd week of November

Heb. 11:6:-

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

In the narrative of Genesis regarding Enoch there is only the mention that he walked with God and that he was not, for God took him. You do not read that this was *by faith*, as the writer of Heb. 11 asserts in vs. 5. To make plain that Enoch pleased God by faith and by faith only, the writer inserts this sixth verse. In it he lays down the general rule that without faith it is impossible to please God, and confirms and explains this rule when he adds, “for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”.

THE GENERAL RULE AS SUCH

Three things seem to be included in this pleasing God. First of all, it implies that the *person* is accepted of God, that God is well pleased with him. Secondly, that his *duties* please God, as God was pleased with the gifts of Abel and the obedience of Enoch; Heb. 13: 16. Thirdly, that such a person has the testimony that he is *righteous*, justified. Of this pleasing of

God the verse asserts that without faith it is impossible. This negative assertion makes the thought so much the stronger that only by faith can one please God. Apart from faith, without faith, none can.

To our mind this general rule clearly gives the death blow: 1. To all attempts to approach God other than in the way of saving faith. Cain tried to please God without faith- it failed. The wicked Jews of Isaiah's day attempted to please God by their works instead of by faith in Christ- it failed. Modernists try to please God by works of their own- it must fail. Only living faith makes us pleasing before God, and that not because faith rests on Christ and his work. Faith adheres to these unseen things, centrally to Christ, while unbelief rejects them. 2. This general rule also seems to us quite definitely to deal the death-blow to the theory of common grace, which teaches that the unbeliever can apart from faith please God. According to this theory the wicked please God when they outwardly adhere to God's law, etc. Jehu's case is often appealed to. However, the rule here expressed, and corroborated among other Scriptures by Rom. 14:23 is definitely against such an interpretation. Without faith it is impossible to please him.

EXPLANATION OF THE RULE

The writer further explains this general truth and confirms it by emphasizing: (1) that he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and (2) must believe that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Anyone that would please God and carry away the testimony thereof must believe that that God is. When the text speaks of coming to God, it means a coming in the way of self-abasement, trusting that he will be received. He must believe that God *is*. Of course, without this fundamental faith it is impossible for man to approach to God. You must note that the certainty in regard to the existence of God, that he is God, is entirely a matter of faith. Various proofs have sometimes been advanced to prove the existence of God, but none of these can prove it. A man must *believe* it- it is a question of faith, not of sight. God himself belongs to the unseen things. Living faith believes that He is, believes that He is God. Very likely, however, the statement of the verse does not merely regard the abstract notion regarding the existence of God, but rather regards believing that he is such a one as He has revealed Himself in His Word, that He is the "I Am" made known to Moses at the burning bush, the faithful covenant God. To please God it is not sufficient merely to believe in the general existence of God, but we must believe that he is such a one as he declares himself to be in Scripture, i.e. a righteous God and a God of mercy and grace to them that come in Christ.

This much certainly must be added, he that cometh to God must believe that "he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him". "Them that diligently seek him" refers to the same seeking of which Jesus speaks in the Sermon on the Mount when he says, "Seek and ye shall find". It is the seeking of faith after God, seeking in the way of confession of sins and trust in God's mercy in Christ. Of such God is the rewarder. They that seek find, they that knock find that God opens to them. He that would please God and be accepted of him must be convinced also of this. Doubting that truth, which though unseen is nevertheless eternally true and real, he cannot ever have the testimony and conviction in his heart that he pleases God.

Only faith, faith as it is the substance of things not seen, and the evidence of things hoped for, can approach God. Without it there is no pleasing of God and no reception.

QUESTIONS: What does it mean to please God? Did Jehu please God, was he pleasing to God, when he destroyed Ahab's house at the command of the Lord? Which arguments are often advanced to prove the existence of God? Are they proofs? How does God reward faith?

Outline 8

NOAH'S FAITH

4th week of November

Heb. 11:7:-

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Compare also Gen. 6-8.

As another illustration from the Old Testament of the just living by faith, the Holy Spirit calls our attention to Noah. This instance may be called especially striking for two reasons. First of all, because Noah lived in dark days, days which in Scripture only find their counterpart in the dark days just preceding the return of Christ. Secondly, because Noah in his time alone of all men feared God.

A DEFINITE WARNING

The text says that Noah was warned of God of the impending disaster about to come upon the world.

The world of Noah's day was ripe for judgment. The amalgamation of the children of God with the sons of men had done its destructive work. Corruption and violence filled the earth. Only Noah was found righteous in God's eyes. One is inclined to ask, How could this rapid degeneration take place? It was hardly seventeen hundred years before that God had created the world. Undoubtedly the following factors will help to explain it. First of all the longevity before the flood, together with the great inventive genius of Lamech's sons used in the service of sin, had much to do with it. Besides, the amalgamation of which we wrote above undoubtedly played a great role in the apostasy of the church. One thing is certain, when the Lord looked down from heaven, all had corrupted their way, and only Noah and his family remained. Perhaps there was plenty "form of godliness," but without the power. There must have been some millions of people (if you compute the figures on the basis of the longevity and of the great fertility of the race), but only one that truly loved the Lord.

The warning of which Heb. 11:7 speaks surely refers to God's revelation to Noah of the coming deluge. Yet one hundred and twenty years and the world would be destroyed. So God spake to Noah his friend, and to Noah alone. Of course, not only Enoch but surely also others had spoken of a coming day of judgment, so that the world was not ignorant of it. Besides, Noah preached it by word and deed for one hundred and twenty years, for he is called the "preacher of righteousness". The difference between Noah and the world of his day was not that Noah knew the flood was coming while the others were entirely ignorant of it. Not at all, the difference was

a matter of faith. The world in general mocked and went on with their sinful life while Noah believed.

HIS OBEDIENCE

When the passage says that Noah “moved with fear prepared an ark” we must not think of Noah as frightened and in that fright building an ark. The Revised Version properly translates “moved with godly fear”. Love casteth out fear, such fear that simply makes us tremble. The fear of obedience, the holy and childlike fear is intended. And in that obedient fear Noah prepared the ark. What a venture of faith that was! For one hundred and twenty years the ark was a-building. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, Noah kept up the work. The world must have mocked and laughed. But Noah was convinced, his faith was not to be shaken.

By this faith in which he built the ark, Noah condemned the world. Certainly Noah also by word of mouth condemned their sin and wanton rebellion against God. He did not keep still when it was his duty to speak. He preached righteousness. But Noah also did this by building the ark. His work on it was a continual testimony against the world, a testimony that as God’s friend he agreed with his God.

All this was certainly *faith*. For, first of all, there was no deluge in sight- all when on as heretofore. Secondly, his persistence and willingness to bear reproach and scorn can only be accounted for by his faith in his eventual justification.

HIS REWARD

Noah also received a great reward, the reward of grace. For himself personally, and for his house.

For himself, for he became an heir of righteousness, the righteousness which is by faith. Briefly expressed, this simply means that in this way of faith Noah possessed the testimony that he was righteous before God. It does not mean that he was to inherit righteousness in the future, but simply that he possessed it. Neither does it mean that Noah was in himself righteous, nor that his faith as such made him acceptable to God: but rather that God declared Noah righteous, and that Noah by faith accepted God at his Word. And it is only thus that we can have the assurance that we are righteous before God. God must declare us righteous, for we are not righteous in ourselves. God does that to those that believe, which faith itself is the gift of God. And, further, that faith by which the testimony of righteousness is ours is an obedient faith. Only in the way of obedience, in acting from that faith, do we have this assurance of righteousness.

For his house. Noah’s faith was not vain, for he and his house were saved. Noah himself not only but also his family. That is the organic idea of the believer and his house so prevalent throughout Scripture.

QUESTIONS: Describe the general apostasy of Noah’s day. Why did this degeneration take place so soon? Why do you think there were already millions of people in Noah’s day? What does it mean that Noah was moved with “fear”? To what is the apostasy of Noah’s time compared in Scripture and why? Why was Noah’s family saved? Were all Noah’s children true believers?

Outline 9

ABRAHAM'S RESPONSE TO GOD'S CALLING

1st week of December

Heb. 11:8:- By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed: and he went out, not knowing whither he went. Gen 11:27--12:27; Acts 7:1-4.

From the illustration of Noah the passage passes on to Abraham, that great hero of faith. No outstanding individual is mentioned in the book of Genesis between Noah and Abraham. There surely were believers during those intervening years but their names have not been given prominence. The only outstanding event between Noah and Abraham mentioned in the Old Testament record is the confusion of tongues, in connection with which no names are particularly associated.

Abraham may rightly be called: *the* hero of faith. Scripture speaks very often of him. He assumes an important place in the development of God's covenant, and is called by Paul: the Father of Believers, and by James: the Friend of God. The latter refers to his relation to God, while the former stresses his peculiar place and position in relation to the believers that followed him. Quite properly the 11th chapter of Hebrews devotes much more space to Abraham than to those that preceded him. As a matter of fact from vs. 8 through vs. 19 the discussion centers about this prominent Old Testament figure. By various instances in Abraham's life the writer shows us how faith was active and controlled the father of believers.

The verse for this evening's discussion deals with Abraham's response of faith to God's calling. We should not that his passage does not deal with the covenant God made with him, etc., but approaches the history from the viewpoint of the question, How did Abraham reveal faith?

WHEN HE WAS CALLED

The writer does not say just when or how Abraham was called. If the narrative in Genesis be compared with what Stephen says in Acts 7 then there were undoubtedly two stages to this calling. The first was while Abram was still in Ur of Chaldees, and the second while he was in Harah where Terah his father died. It is not easy to show the proper relation between these events, but it is plain that Abraham was called of God. The latter receives the emphasis in Heb. 11 and not the time of it.

Neither does the text inform us just how God called Abram; perhaps it was by direct speech. One thing is plain, even though Hebrews 11 does not with so many words state it, *God* it was that called him.

When Abram received the call, Abram went forth. Abram's emigration cannot then be put on a level or viewed in the same light as the emigration of others from their native land and ancestral home since his time. Some have left their native home for material improvement and gain, for social betterment; others to escape the consequences of their evil deeds, the ill name they had acquired, etc; still others have fled their native land to escape religious persecution and to secure freedom of religion. Abraham did not go forth for any of these reasons. He certainly did not go in search of gain, even though God gave him great riches in Canaan. Neither did he

go for freedom of religion—there is nothing to indicate that he did not have this in Ur as well as in Canaan. His removal can only be explained from God’s call.

WHY GOD COMMANDED IT

Although the present passage does not with so many words speak of it, we may well ask the question, Why did God call Abraham to go forth? Why did God wish Abraham to leave his ancestral residence? How must we conceive of Abraham before his call?

There are several explanations which must be rejected. According to some Abram was called to go forth “to preserve the true religion”. According to this interpretation the world had again apostatized since the flood, and to avoid that the pure religion be entirely lost God sent Abram out of Ur. According to this conception Ur was an entirely wicked place. However, God could have accomplished the preservation of the true religion by keeping Abram and his seed in Ur or Haran as well as in Canaan. God does not physically and geographically separate his people in the New Testament, yet he keeps them: this was equally well possible in the Old Testament. Besides, if it had been God’s intention to send Abraham to a less wicked place, he could have sent Abram to some uninhabited land. Actually he sent him into the densely populated Canaan the son of Ham upon whom the curse of Noah had particularly devolved and who were surely very wicked. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah shows that wickedness was more advanced in Canaan than even in Ur, for the latter was not destroyed.

According to a second explanation Abram was separated because he was to be the father of the Jews, of the Jews only, and they are *the* people of God. Also this explanation is averse. The Jews as a nation are not *the* people of God. Neither will they one day return to Canaan. Nor is Abraham their father. Abraham is the father of believers, whether Jew or Gentile. The land of Canaan is not *the* land of promise which the Jews will again receive. Canaan was typical of *the* land promise, the heavenly country. The succeeding verses make the latter point very plain. Abraham was looking for the heavenly country.

To our mind the proper explanation of Abram’s calling to separation is as follows: With Abraham God begins a new phase in the development of his covenant. Prior to this his people were out of all nations and all peoples. Now the covenant is limited to one nation. But only for a time, for Abram is to be the father of many nations, and all the nations of the earth are to be blessed in him. The Christ must be born, and the Old Testament typical apparatus that is to foreshadow the New Testament demands that God limit his people to one nation, that he give them his promises and typical blessing till the time of shadows has passed and the Christ come. Then the church breaks from its national shell and becomes international gain. But now the Christ must come and the holy seed separated unto that end. Of course, Abram did not understand God’s purposes at once; God gradually enlightened him by progressive revelation. Only one thing at the time of the calling was clear and that was that God called him to go forth.

A DIFFICULT DEMAND

God called Abraham to leave his country, his kindred and his father’s house. Note the climax in Gen 12:1. His *country* refers to his native land, his *kindred* to his tribe and family relatives, his *father’s house* to his immediate family. Certainly to leave this all behind was not easy. Others have left their country and kin, it is true, but it is not easy for the flesh. Surely this demand of God was not nearly s difficult as the command to sacrifice his son—the latter was the

climax demand which could only come at the end of an obedient life. This first demand, however, was far from easy and demanded faith. Abram also must have considered the matter from the viewpoint of the flesh, the dangers of leaving his homeland and going into a strange country—subsequent history tells of the sinful plan in regard to Sarah that he laid while about to go. (Gen. 20:13). The arrangement he made with Sarah prior to his going not only shows that Abram saw the difficulties, but it also shows that his faith was not unmixed.

Perhaps you say that it was not hard for Abram to go for he had God's promise. That is true. Whenever God commands something, he also promises something. Indeed God had promised to make him a great nation, to bless him, and that in him all nations should be blessed. But you must remember that his promise was spiritual and could only be apprehended by faith. Remember further that Abram had no son, that he was already past the age when Sarah and he could expect a child. Remember finally that he did not even know whither he was to go. In view of all this obedience could only be a matter of faith.

HIS GREAT FAITH

The text says, Abram "obeyed". With that one word the writer describes Abram's reaction. Abram did leave all and go forth, whither he knew not. That was faith. He went forth because he believed God would show him the land of his inheritance. Faith alone can explain his obedience. By faith he was sure of the things not seen, convinced of the things God made him hope for.

It is well to note that faith and obedience are here coupled together. Faith implies obedience, and faith without obedience is impossible.

QUESTIONS: - Where was Ur of Chaldees? Where Haran? Was Abram's father Terah a believer (Joshua 24:2)? Must we look upon Ur as a godless place at the time Abram left it? Explain. Was Abram separated to "preserve the true religion"? Is Abram only the father of the Jews? Prove that it was merely a matter of faith when Abram emigrated. Does God call us to separate ourselves from family and friends? Was Canaan a wholly godless land when Abram came to it?

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