Abraham and Sarah (PM)

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Date: 14 August 2022

Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0:00] um before i get to the scriptures though i just wanted to say um just a huge thank you for the gift of the sabbatical that i just returned from so if you're new to the church i've been off for three months and it was absolutely wonderful like i feel refreshed and restored and tremendously grateful for that gift um i'm very grateful for the staff who filled in for me um very grateful for the evening service leadership team who really stepped up during this time and i could go on and on about this time but uh we're supposed to be not speaking for very long now so i must go on here we go on with the sermon hebrews 11 so the passage is about faith right so in this chapter it repeatedly says by faith by faith abraham did this by faith sarah did this by faith noah by faith enoch did this etc etc but what does that mean like what what is it what is it actually what is it actually saying when it says that is it just saying that these people were like super positive christians you know is it just saying that they're natural risk takers were they just innately braver than other people around so the question is what what is faith and i think faith is probably one of the most misunderstood concepts amongst non-christians and christians today so let's talk about what faith actually is and i want to define it sort of negatively and positively so what i mean by negative is that i want to talk about what faith is not and then we'll get to the passage and define it more positively because i think there's a few things that we think faith is but it actually isn't so the first wrong-headed idea about faith is this faith is a leap in the dark faith is a leap in the dark now that's actually that's actually how atheists understand faith richard dawkins says faith is blind he said in a recent interview that we only need to use the word faith when there isn't any evidence but that's not the biblical definition of faith the bible doesn't present faith as irrational it's presented as reasonable so where do we see that in the passage look at verse 11 by faith sarah received power to conceive even when she was past the age since she considered him faithful who had promised she considered him faithful who had promised so she was old but she got pregnant god said it would happen she believed god why did she believe god how did that happen was it magic no it says she considered him faithful who had made the promise she used her brain and she realized i can trust what god says so this wasn't like some blind leap in the dark faith is a carefully considered posture of trusting the promises of the promiser faith says we know god and we know he delivers on his promises so faith is not like you know tying your brain in knots doing mental gymnastics trying to make yourself believe unlikely things faith doesn't turn off your brain faith doesn't ignore logic faith is trusting in a person it's trusting god and it's always reasonable and it's always rational to trust the trustworthy when my kids were younger and and lighter you know i could throw them up in the air and catch them and and you know whilst on the air they they wouldn't be freaking out going oh my goodness this is so dangerous like what are you doing i'm gonna call social services you know like they were just they were just happy they were happy by faith they they believed everything would be okay they trusted that i could catch them it was reasonable that was a reasonable trust that was reasonable for them to reach up to me

when i reached down to throw them up in the air so my point again faith is reasonable it's not as some would have us believe anti-intellectual faith faith connects the bible connects faith to our minds verse 3 by faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of god see here faith is an activity of the mind now it's more than that but here it's focusing on that particular aspect of faith look at verse 8 abraham was called out by god to go somewhere he didn't know where he was going he knew it was a foreign place but he packed up and he went he said yes to god was this an irrational act it sounds a bit crazy but no it's just it was a rational response to a god he trusted god made a promise to him and sarah and he trusted that promise you see faith is faith is not something that some people have magically and other people don't faith is not a thing that some are born with and others are not it's it's a human response to god speaking to us god says something

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and we say i trust you that that's faith so in this sense faith is only as good as its object it's only as good as the thing you're trusting in so so let's say i go ice skating on a lake and the ice is really thin but i have lots of faith in that ice what's going to happen right i'm going to die right i'm going to die but if i go ice skating on a lake that has really thick ice but i just have a small amount of faith in that ice i'm going to survive i'm going to be okay so it's not so much how big your faith is even it's it's what your faith is in the object so faith is only as good as its object so whether your faith is big or small it's in the invisible god who created the universe and loved you so much that he would rather die on a cross than be without you this is a god we can trust so again summary right faith is rational because it's always rational to trust a trustworthy god a god who has made certain incredible promises which brings us to another misunderstanding about faith the misbelief is if i just believe enough anything can happen if i just if i can just like if i could just knuckle down and really believe enough anything can happen no that is not faith that is faith in faith it's not faith in god faith is not magic we can't wave it around we can't sprinkle it on our problems and expect them to go away faith is humble it doesn't demand or dictate to god faith is not some master key that unlocks the door to all your problems god doesn't promise that we'll all get health and children and a great career you can't expect those things to go really well in your life just because you'll have enough faith and that's why it's really important to know exactly what god has promised and what he has not so in this passage one of the great promises that's brought to bear is in chapter 11 is this land of promise that was promised to abraham and sir and their descendants and for us it's a picture of a heavenly home that we will all inherit and we can have faith that god will bring about his promise because god said it we can have faith in that promise that because of christ we will be with god for eternity in a remade world where there will be no more tears no more death no more abuse so faith is our response to what god has promised can't just write our own ticket and use faith to get what we want you know just look at the evidence lots of people have had faith over the centuries and some of them have lived these amazingly blessed and well-funded created lives and others have been sawn in half so faith is not irrational it's not a tool you use to get what
you want in life it's a reasonable response to a trustworthy god who makes promises that we can read about now to wrap up our definition of faith let's look at the beginning of verse one now faith is the assurance of things hoped for what does that mean this word assurance has a wide range of meanings it's it's as you'd expect it means confidence faith is confidence and what god has promised about the future but there's another aspect to this word i read some scholarship this week it talked about that it can it can also mean assurance can also mean expression so faith is an expression of our confidence a tangible expression faith is a lived out expression so faith is not just it doesn't remain just a mental picture a mental posture of trust it's not just academic it changes how we live let me give you an example let's say um you've got a good friend from out of town who texts you and says hey i'm gonna come and visit i'll be there thursday at eight o'clock now let's say this friend is somebody who's you like say like they're swiss or something like they're really like particular about time and and and so you know when they say they'll be there thursday they will be there thursday at eight o'clock now not only do you have faith in the promise that they'll be there but that belief produces tangible acts in your life right now you know they're coming so you will go into your bathroom and you will scrub the grout in the tiles in the shower for the first time in a few months right and you will go into your fridge and throw away that dodgy curry that's been sitting there for a few weeks like faith in this unseen future it actually changes how we live now so what you believe about the future produces substantive acts now that's what faith does that's what real faith looks like faith doesn't stay in our brain it's a call to action it's lived out and chapter 11 if you summarize that is a definition of faith and a whole series of examples that of people living out their faith so let's wind this up verse one again faith is the assurance of things hoped for the conviction of things not seen so faith is apprehending this future this unseen reality and seeing it work out in your life right now now both these fears of unseen and future they're like we don't like them they're uncomfortable for us we tend to like present not future we tend to like seen not unseen now i can see my bank account today i can see my career right now all good things nothing wrong with those things but but if that's all you got going in your life that'll be what you live for you'll just keep investing in that and that'll be what shapes you and animates you and motivates you and your life will just be a shadow of what the world has to offer but if you take the word of god seriously and you let it change your life the world may think you're crazy right for choosing to earn less in order to do sort of christiany work perhaps or choosing not to follow the sexual ethics of the world or choosing to spend time with people who are very different to you but they're your brothers and sisters in christ

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if you take the word of god seriously trust in it and you let you let it change and shape your life right now i promise you'll never look back and say i wish i hadn't done that because trusting in god is the most rational thing in the world you can do now if you're the kind of person who likes to go away with uh a sort of particular question to think about after a sermon let me give you a summary question to do that the question is this this is the question i think the passage asks of us the question is this is my life being shaped by the promises of god is my life being shaped by the promises of god you might have listened to the
sermon and you've said to yourself oh man you're right i just need more faith i just need more faith i hope you don't hear me saying to you tonight have more faith just be more faithful you know and when preachers do that it's it's cruel i think it is cruel to do that because you don't get faith by just somebody standing up here and saying have more faith you receive it as you submit your life to the promises of god it's a gift so go away consider the promises of god the ones that may have particular relevance for what's happening for you in your life right now and say i want to submit my life to these promises i want these promises to motivate me to animate and energize my decisions do that and faith will come amen

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